



**Testimony Supporting SB 7  
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National Safety Council  
Senate Committee on Judiciary  
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On behalf of The National Safety Council (NSC), I am writing today to ask for your support of SB 7, legislation that would lower the legal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit in Oregon from .08 to .05. NSC is a nonprofit organization with the mission of eliminating preventable deaths at work, at home and on the road through leadership, research, education and advocacy. Our more than 15,000 member companies represent employees at more than 50,000 U.S. worksites, including nearly 400 in Oregon.

NSC estimates over 40,000 people died nationwide on our roads last year nationwide.<sup>i</sup> In 2017, 436 people died in motor vehicle crashes in Oregon, and 137 lives were lost in alcohol related crashes alone, accounting for over 30% of all motor vehicle fatalities.<sup>ii</sup> Alcohol is the culprit in nearly 29% of fatal crashes nationally and not nearly enough progress has been made in the last 20 years to change this. We need new strategies to address this catastrophic loss of life.

The science is clear - impairment begins with the first drink. There is no safe level of impairment. Even one or two drinks can significantly impair attention, reaction time and decision making. More than 1 in 8 drivers admit to driving when close to or over the legal limit in the past year, despite believing that drunk driving poses a serious threat.<sup>iii</sup> Adopting 0.05% BAC per se laws nationally could save more than 1,500 lives each year.<sup>iv</sup> After 2 or 3 drinks, which corresponds to a BAC of .05 for most adults, drivers have a 40 percent higher crash risk than drivers who remained sober.<sup>v</sup> By the time they reach .08, drivers are four times more likely to crash.<sup>vi</sup>

Lowering the legal BAC limit reduces injuries and crashes. Utah has already implemented .05 BAC, and other states are considering similar legislation. Globally, nearly all industrialized countries have set a BAC limit of .05 or lower, and have lower rates of alcohol related crashes as a result.<sup>vii,viii</sup> Research shows that lowering the BAC limit from .08 percent to .05 percent reduces crash fatality risk by preventing not only low BAC drivers, but also high BAC drivers, from driving.<sup>ii</sup>

Oregon was one of the first states to lower the legal BAC limit from .10 to .08 in 1983 and can lead once again by lowering the legal BAC limit from .08 to .05. It will save lives and prevent injuries in Oregon. NSC fully supports SB 7, and we hope you will support it as well.

If you have any questions, please contact Tara Leystra Ackerman, NSC State Government Affairs Manager at [tara.leystra@nsc.org](mailto:tara.leystra@nsc.org) or 202-445-3121.



<sup>i</sup> National Safety Council Motor Vehicle Fatality Estimates: <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/overview/preliminary-estimates/>

<sup>ii</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Traffic Safety Facts – Alcohol-Impaired Driving 2017: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812630>.

<sup>iii</sup> AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. (2016). 2015 Traffic Safety Culture Index.

<sup>iv</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2018. *Getting to Zero Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities: A Comprehensive Approach to a Persistent Problem*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24951>.

<sup>v</sup> National Safety Council. Low Alcohol Concentration National Culture Change Position Statement: [https://www.nsc.org/Portals/0/Documents/NSCDocuments\\_Corporate/Policy-Positions/Transportation/T-Low Alcohol Concentration Culture Change-130.pdf](https://www.nsc.org/Portals/0/Documents/NSCDocuments_Corporate/Policy-Positions/Transportation/T-Low Alcohol Concentration Culture Change-130.pdf).

<sup>vi</sup> Blomberg RD, Peck RC, Moskowitz H, Burns M, Fiorentino D: The Long Beach/Fort Lauderdale relative risk study; *J Safety Res* 40:285; 2009.

<sup>vii</sup> McLean, A.J., Kloeden, C.N., McColl, R.A. & Laslett, R. (1995). Reduction in the legal blood alcohol limit from 0.08 to 0.05: Effects on drink driving and alcohol-related crashes in Adelaide. In A.J. McLean & C.N. Kloeden (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 13th international conference on alcohol, drugs and traffic safety: August 13-18, 1995*. Adelaide, Australia: NHMRC Road Accident Research Unit.

<sup>viii</sup> Brooks, C & Zaal, D. Effects of a reduced alcohol limit for driving. In H.-D. Utsemann, G. Berghaus and G. Kroj (Eds.), *Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety*: Verlag TUV Rheinland, Cologne, Germany, 1993, 860-865.