



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY



March 8, 2023

The Honorable David A. Clemens, Chair
The Honorable Cole Conley, Vice Chair
Senate Transportation Committee
North Dakota State Senate
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505

Dear Chair Clemens and Vice Chair Conley:

As representatives of leading public health and safety organizations working to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent deaths and injuries and contain crash costs, we urge you to oppose House Bill (HB) 1475. This legislation will permit an increase in speed limits to 80 miles per hour (mph) on access-controlled, paved and divided, multilane interstate highways across North Dakota, endangering state residents as well as visitors.

In 2021, 27 percent of all traffic fatalities in the U.S were speeding related, a five percent increase from 2020.ⁱ According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in the first nine months of 2022, 80 people died as a result of traffic crashes on North Dakota roadways.ⁱⁱ Speeding is a major factor leading to traffic fatalities, contributing to at least 26 percent of traffic fatalities in the state in 2020.ⁱⁱⁱ Excess speed contributes to both the frequency and severity of motor vehicle crashes and proves especially dangerous for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, bicyclists and roadside first responders who lack the protective structure of a vehicle.

Speeding reduces a driver's ability to react to emergencies created by driver inattention, unsafe maneuvers of other vehicles, roadway hazards, vehicle issues (such as tire blowouts) or hazardous weather conditions. Higher speeds will result in more preventable fatalities as well as serious and expensive injuries. Traffic crashes are not only devastating to individuals and families, but they are also costly. In 2019, the economic cost of motor vehicle crashes in North Dakota totaled \$735 million or \$965 per resident.^{iv} During the same year, crashes in which at least one driver was speeding cost our nation more than \$46 billion.^v

Research and statistics consistently and convincingly show speeding is a major safety problem and raising speed limits increases traffic fatalities. Even seemingly modest speed limit changes can have huge impacts on overall traffic safety. Crash tests conducted in 2019 showed that modest five to 10 mph increases in speed can have a severe impact on a driver's risk of injury or even death.^{vi} According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), "Raising speed limits leads to more deaths. People often drive faster than the speed limit, and if the limit is raised, they will go faster still. Research shows that when speed limits are raised, speeds go up, as do fatal crashes."^{vii}

Advancing HB 1475 will cause more death and destruction on North Dakota roads. We urge you to reject this legislation and prioritize the safety of North Dakotan families.

Sincerely,

Chuck Clairmont, Executive Director
North Dakota Safety Council

Lorraine Martin, CEO
National Safety Council

Catherine Chase, President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Stephen Hargarten, MD, MPH, Founding President
Society for the Advancement of Violence and Injury
Research

Janette Fennell, Founder and President
Kids and Car Safety

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- ⁱ Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities and Fatality Rate by Sub-Categories in 2020, NHTSA, May 2022, DOT HS 813 298, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813298>; and Traffic Safety Facts 2020 Data: Speeding, NHTSA, June 2022, DOT HS 813 320, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813320>
- ⁱⁱ Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities for the First 9 Months (January – September) of 2022, NHTSA, December 2022, DOT HS 813 406, Available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813406>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Traffic Safety Facts: Speeding, NHTSA, June 2022, DOT HS 813 320, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813320>
- ^{iv} The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, December 2022, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>
- ^v The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, December 2022, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>
- ^{vi} Impact of Speeds on Drivers and Vehicles – Results from Crash Tests, AAA Foundation for Safety, Humanetics, and IIHS, Jan. 2021, available at <https://www.iihs.org/api/datastore/document/bibliography/2218>
- ^{vii} “Speed.” Topic Overview. IIHS. Web.