



MINUTES

Minor Driver's License Interim Study Committee

Friday, October 13, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Adrian Dickey, Co-chairperson
Senator Chris Cournoyer [by teleconference]
Senator Todd E. Taylor

Representative Brian Best, Co-chairperson
Representative Amy Nielsen [by teleconference]
Representative Brent Siegrist

Ex Officio members:

Ms. Tina Wahlert, Department of Education (DE)
[by teleconference]
Mr. Brett Tjepkes, Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Ms. Melissa Gillett, Department of
Transportation (DOT)
Ms. Linda Rouse, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD)
Mr. Tony Cotto, National Association of Mutual
Insurance Companies (NAMIC) [by teleconference]

LSA CONTACTS: Organizational staffing provided by: Jack Ewing, Administrative Code Editor, 515.281.6048, and Tyler Heeren, Legal Counsel, 515.725.0480; Minutes prepared by: J.D. Arnett, Legal Counsel, 515.281.3745

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I. Procedural Business

Call to Order and Adjournment. The meeting of the Minor Driver's License Interim Study Committee was called to order by temporary Co-chairperson Dickey at 10:05 a.m., Friday, October 13, 2023, in Room 103 of the State Capitol, Des Moines. The meeting was adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

Election of Permanent Co-chairpersons. Members of the committee unanimously elected temporary co-chairpersons Dickey and Best as permanent co-chairpersons.

Adoption of Rules. Members of the committee unanimously adopted the proposed rules.

Opening Remarks. The voting members of the committee made brief introductory comments.

II. Charge

The committee is required to examine policy matters and make recommendations on statutory changes relating to licensed driving by persons between 14 and 18 years of age. Pursuant to Senate File 542, the committee shall submit a report to the General Assembly by December 15, 2023.

III. Comments by Ex Officio, Nonvoting Members

The committee invited the ex officio, nonvoting members to provide comments. Ms. Melissa Gillett, Director of DOT's Motor Vehicle Division, provided background information on the three driver's licenses issued in this state. Ms. Gillett described national best practices related to persons between 14 and 18 years of age who are transitioning from driving with a parent to driving alone. Ms. Gillett provided the committee with statistics related to the number of persons who are 14 or 15 years of age in this state who hold a special minor's license, the number of persons who are 16 or 17 years of age in this state who hold some type of license or permit, and the number of motor vehicle crashes in this state that involve persons between 14 and 17 years of age. Ms. Gillett stated that 92 percent of drivers in this state between 14 and 17 years of age who were involved in a motor vehicle crash were in normal driving conditions when the crash occurred, indicating that inexperience is a factor in motor vehicle crashes among this age group. Ms. Gillett provided background information related to how persons between 14 and 18 years of age can obtain a special minor's license and the restrictions placed on drivers who hold the license. Committee members asked Ms. Gillett what constitutes an approved driver education course in this state. Ms. Gillett responded by describing the two options for driver education courses: driver education courses provided by the school district and parent-taught driver education. Members requested that Ms. Gillett provide crash statistics for drivers in this state between 14 and 15 years of age who hold the special minor's license and crash statistics for drivers in this state who are age 16 compared to crash statistics for the same drivers in other states.

Ms. Tina Wahlert, Bureau Chief for School Improvement in DE, stated that DE is interested in participating in the committee's work and happy to assist as the committee's work proceeds. Ms. Wahlert stated DE does not have oversight over the special minor's license system, and the special minor's license system does not impact school accreditation.

Mr. Brett Tjepkes, Bureau Chief for the Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau in DPS, provided background information related to the work of the Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau, including educational programs provided to students. Mr. Tjepkes discussed the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) "Countermeasures That Work," and how the Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau's work is guided by that publication. Mr. Tjepkes stated that young drivers are overrepresented in fatal crashes relative



to adults, and that in 2020, Iowa had the second highest percentage of fatal crashes among young adults in the country. Mr. Tjepkes stated that, according to NHTSA, the most effective countermeasure for young drivers involves a comprehensive system of graduated driver's license restrictions that allow new drivers to gain experience while restricting their exposure to dangerous driving situations. Mr. Tjepkes discussed the difficulty in enforcing traffic restrictions under the graduated driver's license system and the difficulty in changing the behavior of young drivers. Committee members asked if it was fair to say that younger drivers can be more negatively affected by distractions than older drivers. Mr. Tjepkes responded that the research does support that conclusion. Members inquired whether law enforcement officers would prefer that the laws related to drivers between 14 and 18 years of age be simplified so that it would be easier to enforce the graduated driver's license system. Mr. Tjepkes discussed the resources available to law enforcement officers in enforcing the graduated driver's license system. Members then asked if there was a way to mark vehicles to indicate that a driver between 14 and 18 years of age is driving the vehicle. Mr. Tjepkes responded by describing some of the ways other states mark vehicles to indicate that a driver between 14 and 18 years of age is driving the vehicle.

Ms. Linda Rouse, Division Administrator in IWD, discussed IWD's concerns related to matching employers with employees. Ms. Rouse asserted that the restrictions placed on drivers between 14 and 15 years of age may need to be changed to fully effectuate Senate File 542's changes to Iowa's youth employment laws. Ms. Rouse recommended expanding opportunities for drivers between 14 and 15 years of age to drive to and from employment opportunities.

Mr. Tony Cotto, Director of Auto and Underwriting Policy for NAMIC, provided statistics related to vehicle crashes involving drivers between 14 and 18 years of age. Mr. Cotto discussed the use of graduated driver's license frameworks and how successful these frameworks have been in enhancing road safety. Mr. Cotto discussed the importance of tailoring driving restrictions under a graduated driver's license framework to the state that has adopted that framework. Committee members inquired why insurance premiums were not affected when a child obtained a special minor's license. Mr. Cotto stated he would look into this issue and provide an answer to the committee. Mr. Cotto also discussed generally how insurance premiums are adjusted over time given how risk is calculated. Members requested that Mr. Cotto provide crash statistics and fatality rates for drivers in this state between 14 and 15 years of age who hold a special minor's license. Members also requested that Mr. Cotto provide statistics that compare the number of crashes involving drivers who are 16 years of age in states that prohibit persons between 14 and 15 years of age from driving with the number of crashes involving drivers who are 16 years of age in this state and the number of crashes involving drivers who are 16 years of age in other states that allow persons between 14 and 15 years of age to drive.

IV. Committee Discussion

Co-chairperson Dickey requested that members of the committee submit their thoughts and ideas on the issues the committee discussed to the Legislative Services Agency on or before October 31, 2023. Co-chairperson Dickey then requested that the Legislative Services Agency compile the thoughts and ideas it receives from committee members into one document, which the committee will utilize during the committee's second meeting.

Committee members asked Ms. Gillett about the mileage restrictions placed on students who hold a special minor's license and who are enrolled in a public school compared to the mileage restrictions placed on students who hold the same license but who are enrolled in a nonpublic school. Ms. Gillett



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explained that there is not a mileage restriction placed on students who hold a special minor's license and who are enrolled in a public school; instead, such students may only drive in their district of residence or a contiguous district.

Committee members asked Ms. Rouse how far an employee under 16 years of age could drive to get to the employee's place of employment. Ms. Rouse stated there was nothing in current law that authorizes employees under 16 years of age to drive to their place of employment that is comparable to how the special minor's license authorizes students under 16 years of age to drive to school and school-sponsored activities.

Committee members discussed the potential for increased insurance premiums if more young people are allowed to drive unaccompanied. Members also discussed different ways to indicate that a person driving a car has an instruction permit, special minor's license, or an intermediate license.

Committee members asked the ex officio, nonvoting members whether a student with a special minor's license may drive to an extracurricular event at another school district if the student's district of residence provides transportation to the extracurricular event. Ms. Gillett responded that this is an issue that is likely up to the student's district of residence to determine.

The committee reviewed statistics related to violations of the restrictions placed on special minor's licenses and corresponding license suspensions.

The committee will conduct a second meeting at 10:00 a.m., Monday, November 13, 2023.

V. Materials Filed With the Legislative Services Agency

Materials were distributed at or in connection with the meeting and are filed with the Legislative Services Agency. The materials may be accessed from the "Committee Documents" link on the committee's Internet site accessible at the following address: www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/meetings/minutes?meetingID=37447.