



Office of the Chairman

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, DC 20594

April 10, 2018

The Honorable Bill Taylor
South Carolina House of Representatives
416B Blatt Bldg.
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Representative Taylor:

I am pleased that you are sponsoring H 4480, which will prohibit the use of hand-held personal electronic devices in South Carolina. As a resident of the state, I am especially glad to see South Carolina's distracted driving laws moving in the right direction.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigates only a very limited number of highway crashes each year. Nevertheless, since 2002, we have investigated more than a half-dozen highway crashes in which distraction due to the use of portable electronic devices caused or contributed to the outcome. As a result of our accident investigations, we have seen firsthand that distraction is a growing and life-threatening problem in all modes of transportation. To reduce crashes, injuries, and deaths, drivers and other operators must completely disconnect from an increasing variety of deadly distractions.

Epidemiological, driver-simulator, and naturalistic studies all show that the risk of a crash is higher when a driver uses an electronic device. These studies, conducted by a variety of institutions, make the case that drivers' use of portable electronic devices is dangerously distracting. Further, NTSB investigations and other research show that hands-free is not the same as risk-free. Drivers aren't just visually or manually distracted when using a cell phone or other type of device; they also experience cognitive distraction. A recent study by the AAA Foundation found that drivers' level of cognitive distraction is about equal regardless of whether they are using a hands-free or hand-held cell phone. Even voice-based systems may not eliminate distraction and may have unintended effects on traffic safety. Recognizing the need for drivers to focus on the driving task, in December 2011, we recommended that all 50 states and the District of Columbia ban the nonemergency use of all portable electronic devices (other than those designed to support the driving task) for all drivers.

We believe a significant number of lives can be saved and injuries avoided by South Carolina expanding and strengthening its law. It's past time to face the fact that distracted driving is a serious safety risk. It's not just about the safety of the distracted drivers—it's about the safety of everyone else on the road, because no text, no call, no update is ever worth a human life. Thus, we look forward to the South Carolina House approving this strong measure to address distracted driving.

Thank you for sponsoring this important legislation that has great potential to save lives in South Carolina.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Sumwalt, III
Chairman