TESTIMONY
OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
Monday, February 24, 2003

SB 276, An Act Establishing A Graduated System Of Motor Vehicle Operator's Licensing For Persons Sixteen Or Seventeen Years Of Age

SB 278, An Act Establishing A Graduated System Of Motor Vehicle Operator's Licensing For Sixteen And Seventeen Year Olds

SB 281, An Act Increasing The Penalty For The Operation Of Commercial Motor Vehicles On The Merritt And Wilbur Cross Parkways

SB 821, An Act Establishing A Three-Phase Graduated System Of Motor Vehicle Operator's Licensing For Teenage Operators

HB 5147, An Act Imposing Limitations On Licensed Motor Vehicle Operators Who Are Sixteen Or Seventeen Years Of Age And Increasing The Hours Of Behind-The-Wheel, On-The-Road Driving Instruction

HB 5694, An Act Imposing Limitations On Licensed Motor Vehicle Operators Who Are Sixteen Or Seventeen Years Of Age And Increasing The Hours Of Behind-The-Wheel, On-The-Road Driving Instruction

HB 5699, An Act Establishing A Graduated System Of Motor Vehicle Operator's Licensing For Sixteen To Eighteen Year Olds

HB 5715, An Act Concerning Provisional Motor Vehicle Operator's Licenses

HB 5716, An Act Restricting Sixteen And Seventeen Year Old Motor Vehicle Operators

HB 6200, An Act Imposing Restrictions On Sixteen And Seventeen Year Old Motor Vehicle Operator

SB 921, An Act Concerning The Operation Of Motorcycles And Imposing Limitations On Licensed Motor Vehicle And Motorcycle Operators Who Are Sixteen Or Seventeen Years Of Age

CHA appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of all the above mentioned bills.

CHA supports the above listed bills, which impose limitations on motor vehicle operators who are sixteen and seventeen years of age. There is a mounting body of evidence that suggests that Graduated Drivers License programs are an effective strategy to help meet the formidable challenge of protecting teenage drivers. A review of studies evaluating the experiences of states that have enacted such a system suggests that Connecticut could expect a reduction in fatal and non-fatal injuries among 16-18 year-olds of between 20
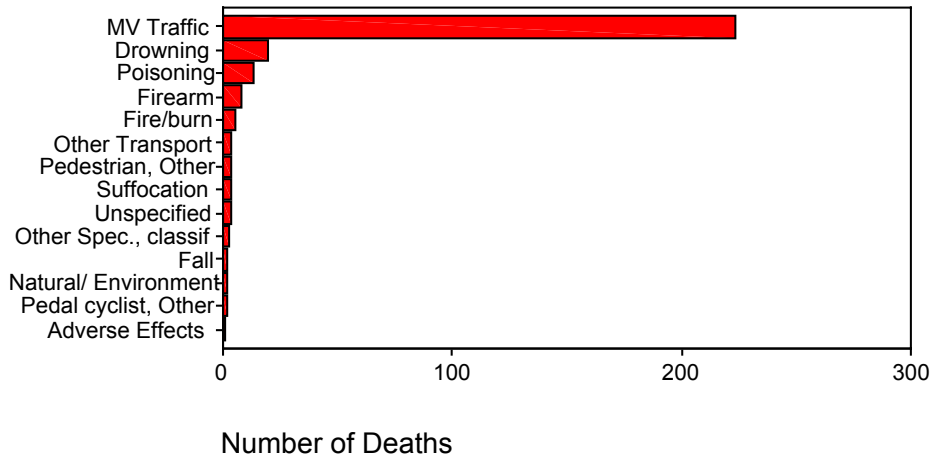
and 44 percent. Based on these studies should Connecticut enact a graduated driver's license program, the state can expect to save the lives of eight 16-18 year-olds every year and prevent injury to an additional 2,611.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, between 1990-1998, Connecticut has had an average of 42,646 deaths every year from motor vehicle accidents. The average annual motor vehicle mortality rate is 16.4 per 100,000 population. The average annual motor vehicle mortality rate is significantly higher among those residents who would be affected by graduated drivers licenses -- among 16-18 years old the average annual motor vehicle mortality rate is 21.27 per 100,000. This indicates that residents in this age group are 1.3 times more likely to die in a motor vehicle accident than those in all other age groups.

In Connecticut in 1998 (the latest year for which information is available), motor vehicle accidents were the leading cause of unintentional death among residents 16-18 years old, accounting for 71.9 % of all deaths due to unintentional injury in this age group.

Unintentional Injuries and Adverse Effects, Connecticut, 1990 - 1998

Ages 16-18, All Races, Both Sexes

Number of Deaths

Data Source: National Center for Heath Statistics (NCHS)

Studies show that imposing certain restrictions on teenage drivers results in a significant decrease in the number of fatalities and injuries. As caregivers of those involved in motor vehicle accidents, hospitals know all too well the large number of fatalities and injuries caused by motor vehicle operators who are sixteen and seventeen years of age. Emergency department staff struggle everyday to save the lives of patients injured in car accidents, and hospitals see this bill as a significant step toward reducing the number of injuries and deaths resulting from motor vehicle accidents.

For these reasons, CHA strongly urges the Committee to favorably report these bills out of committee.

Thank you for your consideration.