

## Sponsor Statement

### **Graduated Driver's License for Teen Drivers**

#### **HB 213 (FIN)**

Car crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in Alaska. While there isn't a silver bullet cure to this utter tragedy, recent studies prove that the Graduated Driver's License system (GDL) is a giant step forward.

HB 213 implements GDL by creating a three-tiered system whereby young drivers pursue their full, unrestricted driver's license. Currently, Alaska only requires a driver under 18 to obtain and hold a learner's permit for 6-months before testing for a driver's license.\* Under HB 213, graduated licensing adds several important protections for the novice driver that relate to when they can drive, where they can drive, with whom and how.

- I. At age 16, a person may be eligible for a Provisional License when:
  - The youth has held a learner's permit for 6 months,
  - Their parent certifies that the youth of at least 40 hours of driving experience, including 10 of driving under progressively challenging conditions such as nighttime or inclement weather conditions, and
  - The youth has not been convicted for violating a traffic law for at least 6 months before applying.
- II. Once the youth holds a Provisional License, they are subject to several limitations for the first **6 months** of driving:
  - Driving between 1 am and 5 am is prohibited except:
  - Generally no passengers except for:
    - Passengers who are 21 yrs or older or siblings of the teen driver
    - Passengers when accompanied by the driver's parent or legal guardian
- III. 6 months after the issuance of a Provisional License, the youth may apply to the department for an unrestricted license
  - *as long they have not been convicted of a traffic offence for at least six months preceding their application.*

~ More ~

Two important *exceptions* to the Provisional License law:

- A driver with a Provisional License may be eligible for a work permit so that they can drive to or from work or drive during the scope of their employment.
- Driver's issued permits or licenses under the DMV's hardship or off-systems licensing programs are in no way affected by the GDL licensing provisions.

**The Graduated Driver's License is a means for the young driver to gain experience on the road while minimizing risks.** As the driver gains experience, the provisions are gradually lifted and the youth is eligible for an unrestricted driver's license.

Since the National Transportation Safety Board adopted its graduated driver licensing recommendations in 1993, states have dramatically modified their driver licensing practices. Since 1993, the 38 states that have adopted comprehensive GDL licensing systems have reported significant reductions in fatality rates of teen drivers and passengers. In California, teen passenger deaths and injuries when 16-year olds are behind the wheel dropped 21 % statewide in 1998 and 1999. These results come two years after passage of California's GDL. Florida, which adopted GDL in 1997, saw a drop of 21 % in the rate teens are involved in accidents.

Research published in October 2001 from Michigan and North Carolina, two states with comprehensive laws that include both an extended learners' permit phase and a nighttime driving restriction reaffirms the effectiveness of graduated licensing. In Michigan, research shows that 16-year olds were 25% less likely to get into a crash; in North Carolina, the risk of a crash dropped by 23 %. Further, in North Carolina, nighttime crashes involving 16 year olds declined by 43% and fatal crashes dropped by 57 %.

**~ Give them the time to learn to drive ~**

The goal is to limit teen exposure to risky driving situations during their first few months of licensure, a time when their crash rates are extremely high. Parents indicate strong support for GDL and for the specific restrictions. Graduated licensing will save young lives in Alaska, guaranteed!

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\* In 1997, with passage of HB 11, Alaska adopted a mandatory 6-month learner's permit for drivers under 18 yrs old.

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