

Testimony from Bracha Poliakoff:

While it was my mom's untimely death that inspired our advocacy in this area, this is about way more than my mother. As a geriatric social worker, I see how difficult it is for seniors to give up their independence - sometimes in multiple areas of their lives - and I see the grief they feel when they do. However, sometimes the values of science and safety must outweigh the value of independence. The law we are proposing today is not at all radical. It is just bringing our state up to the standard that many other states have had for a while. My colleague at Lifebridge Health, Jan Crye, an OT with 42 years of experience, wrote up some of her thoughts on this issue based on her unique experience as a certified driving rehabilitation specialist and as a person who is very familiar with the multiple sides of this issue and has evaluated the driving of over 7000 individuals.

I would like you to especially pay attention to the middle paragraph, where Jan writes:

According to the Governors Highway Safety Administration, impairments in three key areas—vision, cognition and motor function—are responsible for higher crash rates for older drivers. Vision declines with age; cognition, which includes memory and attention, can be impacted by medical problems such as dementia and medication side effects; and motor function suffers as flexibility declines due to diseases such as arthritis. There often is a variety of other common healthcare issues such as diabetes, strokes, cardiac problems. Many states routinely attempt to identify, assess and regulate older drivers with diminishing abilities who cannot or will not voluntarily modify their driving habits. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 18 states require older drivers to renew their drivers licenses more often than the rest of the state's residents. In addition, 18 states require more frequent vision tests for older motorists. Sixteen states and the District of Columbia prohibit older drivers from renewing licenses by mail or online. One state, Illinois, requires older drivers age 75 and over to take a road test at renewal and the District of Columbia requires a doctor's approval for drivers over the age of 70 to renew their licenses.

Thank you for considering this legislation. May our mother's memory be a blessing.