

**TESTIMONY OF  
PEARRE DEAN  
AREA COPE DIRECTOR  
PENNSYLVANIA AFL-CIO**

**before**

**THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
HONORABLE THOMAS GANNON, CHAIRMAN**

**on**

**IGNITION INTERLOCK DEVICES**

**MAY 21, 1999**

**HARRISBURG, PA**

Chairman Gannon, Minority Chairman Blaum, distinguished Members of the Committee and Committee Staff, my name is Pearre Dean and I am the Area C.O.P.E. Director for the Pennsylvania AFL – CIO.

It is a pleasure for me to testify, before this Committee on behalf of our 1.2 million members in the Commonwealth on the issue of Ignition Interlock Devices.

As most Pennsylvanians, our members drive to and from work, and some drive as part of their employment. And the loss of driving privileges is a hardship no one can afford. Lost driving privileges equates to lost wages, productivity and possibly being fired. A “Bread and Butter” license which grants you permission to drive back and forth to work requires an attorney, time and PennDOT’s approval.

The Pennsylvania AFL – CIO realizes that alcoholism is a disease. Our concern is to get our members treatment and get them back to work, as soon as possible.

The Pennsylvania AFL – CIO supports this legislation and asks that this Bill move quickly.

The way the current D.U.I system stands, if you are stopped for D.U.I you will be arrested, convicted, pay heavy court cost, fines, you may lose your driving privileges and could go to jail. While this sounds harsh and something to avoid, a recent report released by the Pennsylvania State Police says that D.U.I arrest are up.

Ignition Interlock Devices seem to be an effective means to reduce repeat offenders from further arrest and allow them go back to work, while keeping our roads and highways safe. The Ignition Interlock Device is a breathalyzer hooked up to an ignition system. If your blood alcohol content is over a predetermined limit your car will not start. In some states they require two test. One before starting the car and one “rolling test” which is required while you are driving. This prevents a sober person from getting the car started for a person who is intoxicated. That second breath from the intoxicated person will shut the car down, with flashing lights and sounding horn.

I worked as a receiving clerk for a grocery chain for eighteen years. The loading dock is no place for someone who is intoxicated. Whether driving a tractor trailer or fork lift the potential for injury is great if just one of those people is under the influence. I believe the Ignition Interlock Device will create a reduction in work place injuries.

On a more personal note my brother was hit by a drunk driver while riding his bike and was dragged over fifty feet. Two years later that same driver killed a utility worker while driving under the influence. If the Interlock Devices were available a life might have been saved. Just two years ago I was rear-ended by a repeat offender while stopped at a traffic light.

According to a study done in Hamilton County, Ohio Ignition Interlock Devices work. The National Commission Against Drunk Driving conducted the thirty month test. Judges in the county picked Four hundred fifty-five possible participants, with Two hundred seventy-three accepting the Interlock devices. Forty - one of the none participants were re-arrested for D.U.I while only four of the participating device users were arrested. The four were caught while driving cars not equipped with the interlock devices.

When this piece of legislation becomes law, Pennsylvania will have joined Thirty other states in trying to reduce D.U.I accidents and promote work place safty.

This concludes my testimony and I will answer any question from the Committee.