

**Testimony of Joseph Regan, Fraternal Order of Police, PA State Lodge
Before Pennsylvania House Transportation Committee
April 3, 2018 – Distracted Driving**

Good morning. My name is Joseph Regan. I am a retired veteran of the Lower Merion Township Police Department in Montgomery County. I also serve as Recording Secretary and Legislative Committee Chairman of the Fraternal Order of Police, Pennsylvania State Lodge, which represents 40,000 law enforcement professionals throughout Pennsylvania.

I would like to thank Committee Chairmen Taylor and Keller and other members of the House Transportation Committee for your work on matters of concern to Pennsylvania's Police Officers. I appear before you today to discuss the PA FOP's position on two pieces of legislation intended to address the dangers posed by distracted driving.

House Bill 892 creates the new summary offense of distracted driving in cases where a driver is also found to be driving carelessly, and it also creates an awareness fund from fines generated related to violations. House Bill 1684 goes further by imposing a prohibition on hand-held mobile phone calls while driving, except with the use of hands-free accessories, or in all cases for minors under 18 years of age.

Both HB 892 and 1684 are intended to respond to the growing problem of distracted driving. There are several potential reasons for distracted drivers -- texting while driving, use of a hand-held mobile phone, prohibited use of hearing impairment devices, talking to a passenger, putting on make-up and the list goes on.

The National Highway Safety Traffic Administration reports that distracted driving was a factor in almost 400,000 traffic accidents across the United States in 2015, resulting in 3,500 deaths. That same year here in Pennsylvania, distracted driving was a factor in almost 15,000 crashes and 61 deaths. In 2016, sadly, that number increased to over 16,000 distracted driving crashes. For perspective, the number of crashes in which distracted driving was a factor is almost 60% higher than crashes in which alcohol was a factor. Clearly, distracted driving is a serious problem in Pennsylvania.

As a police officer, I have seen firsthand the aftermath of an accident involving a distracted driver. Having advanced training in accident investigation one of the many causes of vehicular accidents I investigated is the reaction time of the driver. Perception/reaction time is important for safe driving and this diminishes with the use of devices and other distractions resulting in drivers taking their eyes off the road. The destruction doesn't end with the vehicles. Families and lives are ruined in an instant. Distracted driving is not a fad or something that's going away quickly. Sadly, it's here to stay and as technology advances, the chances of distracted driving are only going to increase.

The Pennsylvania FOP supports House Bills 892 and 1694 because they take meaningful steps to curb distracted driving. Driving is a privilege and should be taken seriously...by everyone. There is nothing more important than what is happening when you're behind the wheel. We can't stop technology from advancing but we can stop distracted driving, and House Bills 892 and 1694 take strong first steps here in the Pennsylvania to do just that. The PA FOP supports these bills sponsored by Representatives Brown and Murt.

In closing, let me again thank the Committee members for your continued support of Pennsylvania's Law Enforcement Officers. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this and other issues to provide for safer roads and safer citizens throughout the Commonwealth. I would be happy to answer any questions on my testimony. Thank you.