Mary Lou Terrien - Protect Riders by Preserving Helmet Law

From: "Cherry-Bukowiec, Jill" <jillcher@med.umich.edu>
To: "'paulopsommer@house.mi.gov'" <paulopsommer@house.mi.gov>, "'BenGlardon@...
Date: 9/23/2011 7:13 PM
Subject: Protect Riders by Preserving Helmet Law

Please vote NO on any effort to repeal Michigan's mandatory motorcycle helmet law.

Dear Representative,

I am a Trauma Surgeon at the University of Michigan and I strongly request that when it comes time you vote ***NO*** on the repeal of the Helmet Law. I see many, many patients devastated by motorcycle accidents, and the toll on their family is heartbreaking to say the least. With this repeal many more men and women will suffer debilitating brain injuries that will leave them requiring extensive amount of care in nursing home situations with little resemblance of their former selves, if they are lucky to live. Motorist rarely think of the toll that a brain injury can have on others. Taking care of these patients is extremely hard on the families, friends and co-workers, but is also distressing to those witnessing the accident, stressful on the first responders and medical staff watching patients suffer and families be torn apart. In essence, the entire community suffers. This doesn't even come close to estimating the financial burden these injuries cost society directly in long term care, but also indirectly as the patient cannot work, the family has to take extended leave from work, their children's futures are changed forever, and the list goes on. Not only could a repeal of this law potentially endanger the lives of thousands of people on our roads, but it also could end up costing all of us in insurance claims made as a result of motorcycle accidents, especially since the occurrence and severity of injuries sustained in motorcycle accidents are often greater than those in automobile accidents. I am a firm believer in individual rights and the ability to make your own choices, but not when the burden on society and others around you is so great, and the inconvenience to the individual so minor in comparison. I akin this law to seat belt and car seat laws that save countless lives with minimal intrusion on one's freedom.

Some simple facts: 68% of state residents are in favor of mandatory helmet use. Numerous studies document helmets reduce the risk of death and head injury in motorcyclists who crashed. Helmets don't significantly affect the vision and hearing of motorcycle riders. Helmet use reduces the incidence of spinal injury in motorcyclists. Only slightly more than half of motorcycle crash victims have private health insurance coverage. The government pays a majority of medical costs for the underinsured. Most importantly, repeal of the Michigan helmet law will lead to a significant rise in deaths, head injuries and socioeconomic costs based on the experience in other states when mandatory use laws changed

If you need proof, think about these alarming statistics: riders without helmets are 40% more likely to suffer fatal head injuries than those with helmets and are 15 percent more likely to incur nonfatal head injuries (Office of Highway Safety Planning study).

I feel confident that many of your constituents would applaud your action in opposing this propoposal and keeping motorists safe.

Please feel free to contact me for any further information.

Thank you!

Jill Cherry-Bukowiec MD, MS
Assistant Clinical Professor of Surgery
Division of Acute Care Surgery
University of Michigan
Ann arbor, MI 48109
Work: 713-936-2661
Administrative assistant: Kristy Brown
Cell 419-215-7139

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