



The Honorable Robert Craven, Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island State House, 82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

March 4, 2025

Dear Chairman Craven and Judiciary Committee members,

On behalf of AAA Northeast and its 537,000 members in Rhode Island, I respectfully write to you in support of House Bill 5640, “An Act Relating to Motor and Other Vehicles—Passing, Use of Lanes, and Rules of the Road,” which adds a provision to the statute relating to one way highways, calling for increased penalties when a motorist travels the wrong way on an interstate highway or an entrance or exit ramp connected to an interstate highway.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, (FTS) AAA’s non-profit research arm, has done extensive research on wrong-way driving and its profound impact on our roadways. According to an FTS report, fatal wrong-way driving crashes on U.S. roadways pose a persistent and devastating threat that is only growing worse. The most recent report reveals there were 2,008 deaths as a result of wrong-way driving crashes on divided highways between 2015 and 2018, an average of 500 deaths annually. These numbers represent a dramatic increase over the 375 wrong-way driving deaths from 2010 to 2014.

In addition to these stunning numbers, FTS researchers found that the three major factors related to wrong-way driving are alcohol impairment, increasing age, and driving without a passenger. Six in ten wrong-way crashes were associated with an alcohol-impaired driver, and wrong-way crashes on divided highways are often fatal as they are typically head-on collisions.

The impairment factor driving many wrong-way crashes has significance for Rhode Islanders because here in the Ocean State, 43% of fatal crashes involve drunk driving—with Rhode Island tied with South Carolina for the highest percentage of alcohol-related fatal crashes in the nation, compared to a national average of roughly thirty percent.

These numbers clearly demonstrate that we need to redouble our efforts in Rhode Island to address this roadway hazard. House Bill 5640 would increase the penalties for wrong-way driving by imposing a \$500 fine and a six-month license revocation, which, in our opinion,

will help deter dangerous wrong-way driving behavior. Accordingly, AAA Northeast strongly supports enactment of this legislation.

Many thanks for your consideration of this life-saving issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Maguire

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mary Maguire". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Vice-President, Public and Government Affairs, AAA Northeast