

**THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES
UNDERAGE DRIVING AMENDMENT ACT OF 2008 HEARING**



**Testimony of
Lucinda Babers, Director
Department of Motor Vehicles**

**Before the
Committee on Public Works and the Environment
Jim Graham, Chairperson**

**Wednesday, June 25, 2008
10:00 am – Room 500
The Wilson Building
Washington, DC**

Good Morning, Chairperson Graham, members of the Committee and Council, and your staffs. My name is Lucinda Babers, and I am the Director of the District's Department of Motor Vehicles (DC DMV). Today I will share the Executive's position related to Bill 17-0632, The Underage Driving Amendment Act of 2008, which proposes to require that any applicants under the age of 21 must complete a 2 hour drug and alcohol awareness class prior to submitting an application for a motor vehicle operator's permit.

Based on historical data, DC DMV estimates an average of 11,000 individuals would be impacted by this proposed bill. Currently, there is not a mandatory driver's education course required to obtain a first-time license in the District; the only requirement is that the applicant pass a knowledge and skill test. Although most jurisdictions offer driver education, which normally includes drug and alcohol information, in the school system, research shows that traditional driver education

and training programs have yet to demonstrate consistent attainment of safety objectives. However, motor vehicle and other safety agencies still support driver education as a viable training program for the novice driver.

The Executive is not aware of any certified organizations which currently offer a 2 hour drug and alcohol awareness class. Most of the organizations currently certified by the Department of Health are long term programs aimed at treatment such as detoxification, residential and outpatient services. With the passage of this bill, the private sector would likely create the necessary 2 hour awareness class that would be available to applicants for a fee. However, we are concerned about the potential cost of this bill, and we question whether the applicant or District is expected to cover the cost of the awareness class. Although the District currently assesses a \$5 driver education fee for each driver's license issued, these funds, which equate to about \$400,000 per year, are not sufficient to fully fund a comprehensive driver education program (which is estimated at \$1.5 to \$2 million per year).

Therefore, the Executive recommends that we explore a requirement for a mandatory driver education program for novice drivers which would include an alcohol and drug awareness component. Such exploration would include the need to identify sufficient funding.

I'm glad to respond to any questions you may have related to this proposed bill.
Thank You.

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