



Office of
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For Immediate Release

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House passes distracted driving bill

Representative Kane supports effort to improve road safety

BOSTON – The House of Representatives has approved legislation that will soon mandate hands-free cell phone use while driving in Massachusetts.

House Bill 4203, *An Act requiring the hands-free use of mobile telephones while driving*, will extend the current ban on cell phone use by drivers under the age of 18 to include all Massachusetts drivers, following a 90-day phase-in period. The bill – which represents a compromise negotiated by a six-member House and Senate Conference Committee – passed the House on a vote of 154-1 on November 19.

The Senate is expected to vote on the Conference Committee report on November 20. Governor Charlie Baker will have 10 days to review the bill once it reaches his desk.

State Representative Hannah Kane, R-Shrewsbury, said she supports the new restrictions on cell phone use for motorists because it will help improve public safety and reduce traffic fatalities on the state's roadways. Twenty other states – including Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island – already ban the use of cell phones while driving.

Under House Bill 4203, Massachusetts drivers will face fines of up to \$500 for using a hand-held cell phone for making calls, unless they are reporting an emergency. Drivers can still view GPS navigation with their cell phone, and can use a single tap or swiping motion to activate or deactivate their device's hands-free setting.

Violators will be fined \$100 for a first offense, \$250 for a second offense, and \$500 for a third and all subsequent offenses. Second and subsequent offenders will be required to complete a distracted driving program approved by the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) that encourages changes in driver behavior, while three-time offenders will face an insurance surcharge in addition to the fine.

The bill contains provisions allowing for the issuance of a warning for a first-time offense until March 31, 2020. It also requires the RMV, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security's Highway Safety Division, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the

Department of Higher Education, and municipal law enforcement to implement an annual public awareness campaign regarding the dangers of distracted driving.

House Bill 4203 also updates the state's laws regarding data collected at traffic stops that result in a citation. The bill requires the RMV to collect data on the age, race and gender of the driver; the traffic infraction; the date, time and location of the offense; whether a search was initiated as a result of the stop; and whether the stop resulted in a warning, citation or arrest. The Secretary of Public Safety and Security will be responsible for transmitting this data to a public or private educational or non-profit entity for an annual analysis and report.

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