



February 23, 2015

Rep. Max Tyler, Chair
House Transportation & Energy Committee
200 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Representative Tyler,

We write on behalf of Safe Kids Colorado, Safe Kids Colorado Springs, Safe Kids Denver Metro and Safe Kids Worldwide in opposition to HB15-1098, which would require local governments to discontinue the use of automated vehicle identification systems (commonly called “red light cameras”). We are concerned that the abandonment of the devices will lead to the loss of lives of pedestrians, especially children, who are at greatest risk for these preventable injuries. The red light cameras are a proven tool to calm traffic, encourage responsible driving, and make streets safer. Moreover, they free law enforcement to protect lives in other ways.

The respected Insurance Institute for Highway Safety studied the utility of the systems and found they are highly effective. In 2012, 683 people died in crashes that involved driving through red lights. Of those fatalities, more than half were pedestrians, bicyclists, and occupants of other vehicles hit by red light runners. The study concluded that red light cameras saved 159 lives for the period dating from 2004 – 2008 in 14 of the largest cities in the United States. The report predicted that a total of 815 deaths could have been prevented if cameras were operating in all large cities during that time.

Incidents in Colorado mirror this research. At four intersections in Denver with cameras, collisions were reduced by 27%; there was a 26% reduction in collisions at red light protected intersections in Aurora. Furthermore, when cities abandon the systems, crashes rise significantly, as evidenced by a 584% increase in Albuquerque, and a 117% increase in Houston.

Also of note, teenagers would be disproportionately impacted should the use of these cameras be discontinued, as they tend to be more frequently distracted by personal electronic devices while walking through intersections. Safe Kids Worldwide has previously conducted a study observing 34,000 intersection crossings at 68 high schools and middle schools throughout the nation, including Denver. Results from the study found that 1 in 5 high school students, and 1 in 8 middle school students, cross the street while distracted by technology. Speeding and running red lights will put those kids at greater risk.

Safe Kids Worldwide is a nonprofit organization working to prevent childhood injury, the number one killer of children in the United States. Throughout the world, almost one million children die of an injury each year, and almost every one of these tragedies is preventable. Safe Kids works with an extensive network of more than 500 community-based coalitions in the United States, including five in Colorado. Children’s Hospital Colorado serves as lead agency for Safe Kids Colorado, Safe Kids Colorado Springs, and Safe Kids Denver Metro. Together we are dedicated to protecting kids from unintentional injuries, the number one cause of death to children in the U.S.

Based on the data and our experience, we strongly urge the Committee to reject HB15-1098.

Sincerely,

Dwayne Smith
Safe Kids Colorado

Laura Kent
Safe Kids Colorado Springs

Susan Yates
Safe Kids Denver Metro

Anthony Green
Safe Kids Worldwide