



May 16, 2023

The Honorable Mike Parson  
Governor of Missouri  
P.O. Box 720  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Governor Parson,

Missourians for Responsible Transportation—a partnership between Trailnet in St. Louis, BikeWalkKC in Kansas City, Ozark Greenways in Springfield, Local Motion in Columbia, and rural communities across the state—is writing you to support hands-free legislation in Missouri. Missourians for Responsible Transportation’s mission is to be the leader in fostering strong communities by aligning advocacy efforts for streets, roads, and trails that work for all Missourians. Founded in 2018, Missourians for Responsible Transportation serves as an umbrella partnership that brings together communities and grassroots organizations from urban and rural areas to advocate with one voice at the state level for a fiscally responsible, safe, and equitable transportation system. Missourians for Responsible Transportation represents 35,000 members across Missouri and **we are writing you today to show our support for hands-free legislation in Missouri**, specifically to ask for your signature and support of Senate Bill 398, which includes language for the “Siddens Bening Hands Free Law.”

Distracted driving is a real problem on Missouri roads. In the last 10 years, there have been nearly 200,000 crashes caused by distracted driving, with every county in the state having reported crashes. Nearly 2/3rds of Missourians involved in distracted driving crashes were innocent victims that were not engaged in distracted driving. In the last 10 years, 421 of our state’s children have been killed or suffered life-altering injuries in crashes caused by distracted drivers. Just last month, Cambridge Telematics published new reports showing that drivers interacted with their smartphones on 59% of all trips in Missouri. Furthermore, 2022 saw Missouri's worst roadway fatality record since 2006, and the problem is only becoming deadlier. Unfortunately, Missouri’s outdated laws have done little to help keep our neighbors safe.

Missourians overwhelmingly recognize how dangerous it can be to drive distracted. A majority of citizens, 95%, view using hand-held devices to text or make phone calls behind the wheel as “very serious” or “somewhat serious.” Additionally, more than two-thirds of Missourians would support a hands-free law, according to a 2020 statewide poll. It’s encouraging to know that other states that have implemented a hands-free law have experienced a decrease in traffic deaths—an average of 16% fewer people dying within 2 years—and Missouri could see a similar reduction in fatalities. This would mean saving the lives of over 120 Missourians in the next ten years.

Having a cell phone in your hand while you’re driving is not acceptable, driving distracted is not acceptable, and **we hope you’ll join us in supporting hands-free legislation in Missouri**. Missouri needs to take a step in the right direction for the safety of all our neighbors on our roads and streets—including you and your loved ones.

Sincerely,

Taylor March - Executive Director, Missourians for Responsible Transportation