



TPC Testimony

SB 011 – Minor Driver’s Education Requirements

Senate Transportation & Energy Committee

1.23.23, SCR 352

My name is Andrea Wilkins and I am submitting testimony in regard to SB23-011, Minor Driver’s Education Requirements, on behalf of the Colorado Teen Parent Collaborative, or TPC. The TPC is monitoring this legislation but wants to raise some points for consideration.

The TPC is a unified community of organizations driven by the strength of teen parents to raise public awareness, share resources, and advocate for public policy that benefits teen parents and their children. Its members include individuals and organizations from across Colorado advocating on behalf of or providing services and supports to pregnant and parenting teens and their children. The TPC is supportive of policies that promote self-sufficiency by removing barriers and creating opportunities for young families.

SB23-011 provides a tax credit for individuals who purchase driver’s education courses for a minor and expands the requirement to complete 30 hours of driver’s education classroom training to all minors 18 and under. The TPC is supportive of the safety measures being considered to ensure that young people in Colorado are competent drivers. In addition, we are supportive of a tax credit or other financial supports to help young drivers access training needed to become safe drivers. We want to point out, however, possible implications to the Teen Parent Driver’s Education Grant Program, created via HB22-1042 – Teen Parent Driving Instruction Course. This program became operational in July 2022 and is housed within the Colorado Department of Human Services. The TPC advocated for the development of this program as a tool to promote self-sufficiency among teen parents and to promote public safety.

In doing so, the program provides financial support to teen parents between the ages of 15-19 residing in Colorado to ensure they have the supports needed to obtain driver’s education, learner’s permits, and ultimately a driver’s license.

Many TPC providers have observed the difficulty teen parents have in obtaining a driver's license, as well as related challenges. Those challenges include the inability to pay for driver's education courses needed to obtain a driver's permit, inability to pay fees associated with a driver's permit or license, and lack of access to a responsible adult who can supervise the required practice drive time hours or sign the affidavit of liability required by the DMV. The inability to obtain a driver's license is a barrier to self-sufficiency in that it can impede teen parents from getting to school, driving to work, and getting their children to child care or medical appointments. Teen parents residing in rural communities with little or no public transportation face even greater barriers. Driving is so essential to teen parents' ability to handle their responsibilities that many without a license feel forced to drive illegally. In turn, this can compound barriers to self-sufficiency as driving without a license can result in tickets, fines, and related legal problems. Further, teen parents who cannot access driver's education or receive instruction from a supervising adult can pose a safety risk to themselves, their children, and the public.

While the TPC is not opposed to the provisions of SB23-011, we want to point out that the expanded requirements for driver's education training will also expand the number of teen parents in need of financial support to access such training. Moreover, it is important for policymakers to recognize that teen parents frequently have low incomes and limited resources, and are among the most vulnerable families in our communities. They are in no position to afford the expenses associated with driver's education training or fees associated with a learner's permit or driver's license. As such, a tax credit would not be practical for these young people. The TPC urges the General Assembly to view the tax credit provisions of SB23-011 as an additional tool to help families and young people access driver's education courses, that should be used in combination with other supports, such as the Teen Driver's Education Grant Program and similar supports established via HB21-1084 - Driver's Licenses for Foster Children, so that vulnerable minors in our state can access training more readily available to their higher income peers.

We would like to thank the members of this committee for your consideration of these important issues.

Thank you,
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