

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2015

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Jim Frazier, Chair
AB 235 (Frazier) – As Introduced February 5, 2015

SUBJECT: Driver's licenses: provisional licenses

SUMMARY: Requires drivers under the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Provisional Licensing Program to be subject to program driving restrictions until age 18.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires a person to be at least age 15 and a half to apply for an instructional driver's permit and to hold the permit for a minimum of six months prior to applying for a provisional driver's license (PDL).
- 2) Allows DMV to issue a driver's license to an applicant who is at least 16 years of age but under 18 years of age pursuant to DMV's Provisional Licensing Program.
- 3) Requires a provisional licensee to be subject to the following restrictions during the first 12 months after issuance of a PDL:
 - a) Driving during the hours of 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. is prohibited; and,
 - b) Transporting passengers who are under 20 years of age, except as specified is prohibited.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: The Provisional Licensing Program is widely perceived to be a major success in reducing the number of accidents, injuries, and deaths among teenage drivers. Key to this success is that provisional licensing programs are designed to protect young novice drivers by restricting exposure to risk initially and then gradually phasing in increased privileges as the driver gains experience. Provisional licensing programs implemented in states across the country are designed in this manner due to the fact that, as the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety notes, "teenage drivers have the highest crash risk per mile traveled, compared with drivers in other age groups because young drivers tend to overestimate their driving abilities and underestimate the dangers on the road."

Studies published in the American Medical Association (2011) and by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (2012) have concluded that overall, provisional licensing programs across the country have had "a major impact in reducing young driver crashes and associated injuries to themselves and others." According to the AAA study, in 1995 prior to the widespread introduction of provisional licensing programs, 2,667 drivers ages 16-17 involved in fatal crashes across the country. By 2010, the accident rate dropped 57% with 1,150 fatal crashes for the same age group.

Furthermore, considerable research has produced strong evidence that support states' efforts to strengthen provisional licensing programs for young drivers. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that young drivers are particularly vulnerable to "certain high-risk driving situations," such as driving at night and driving with teenage passengers. In its "2008 Report to Congress," NHTSA found "young drivers are frequently inexperienced in hazard recognition and often take unnecessary risks due to a combination of poor decisions making and an illusion of invulnerability." Additionally, another AAA Foundation report (2013) affirms that states with the most comprehensive provisional licensing systems have achieved the greatest reductions in crash rates of drivers ages 16 and 17.

This bill aims to reduce teenage accident rates by extending the period PDL drivers are subject to provisional licensing requirements – currently 12 months – to age 18 regardless of the age a PDL driver originally obtains their driver's license.

Previous legislation: AB 1801 (Frazier) of 2014, identical to this bill, AB 1801 would have required provisional license drivers to be subject to program driving restrictions until age 18. AB 1801 was held on the suspense file in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 1113 (Frazier) of 2013, would have made changes to DMV's Provisional Licensing Program by requiring a person to hold an instructional driver's permit for a minimum of nine months prior to applying for a PDL, requiring all PDL restrictions to remain in effect for provisional licensees until they reach age 18, prohibiting a provisional licensee from transporting passengers under age 21, and extending nighttime driving restrictions 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. AB 1113 was vetoed by Governor Brown.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Allstate Insurance Company (Sponsor)
Automobile Club of Southern California
California State Sheriffs' Association
State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company

Opposition

None on file

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