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November 10, 2011

Dear Governor Snyder,

We are writing today with an **urgent appeal** that you veto legislation to repeal Michigan's universal helmet law, should it reach your desk.

We strongly believe repealing Michigan's longstanding universal helmet law would be a great disservice to Michigan's motorcyclists, the state's performance in serving the best interests of its citizens, our standing as a national leader in motor vehicle safety, and the economic health of the state.

A recent report by the National Academies shows that Michigan's motor vehicle crash rates are among the 10 best in the nation and continue to decline. This position has been hard won. Michigan has been seen as a leader for other safety initiatives and has received positive press for having the best rate of safety belt use in the nation at 97% compliance, saving countless lives and injuries. Michigan's high ranking in roadway safety is a legacy resulting from years of conscientious effort on the part of the state's leadership.

The repeal of the motorcycle helmet law would undermine the significant safety performance efforts by your administration and previous administrations. We applaud Michigan's success in reducing fatalities and in making the reduction of motor vehicle fatalities and serious injuries a key performance measure in your **Infrastructure Dashboard**. We have also contributed to this effort, tracking and evaluating crashes in Michigan for almost 20 years and assisting Michigan's safety professionals by managing the Michigan Crash Facts website. Those data show that, unlike all other classes of roadway fatalities, motorcycle fatalities have been increasing. While total roadway fatalities have been decreasing, from 1159 in 2004 to 937 in 2010, Michigan motorcycle fatalities have *increased* from 79 fatalities in 2004 to 125 fatalities in 2010. The proposed repeal would produce an even greater *increase in fatalities* involving Michigan's motorcycle riders and passengers. (Please refer to the attached sheet for more statistics.)

These Michigan motorcycle fatalities (125 in 2010) represent a disproportionate social and economic burden on the state, its communities, and families. Traumatic brain injuries are a common outcome of motorcycle crashes, especially when helmets are not worn. These injuries incur high costs of treatment, averaging almost \$0.5 million per brain injury fatality and many times more in lifetime costs for survivors (up to \$4 million per case). Clearly, the proposed requirement for \$20,000 medical insurance coverage will do little to offset the high costs resulting from a helmet law repeal.

Constant attention to risk reduction and performance management is needed to achieve Michigan's safety goals. This is well reflected in your Infrastructure Dashboard approach to managing outcomes for the state's citizens. The combined efforts of Michigan's safety professionals are improving the safety culture in our state. This means that crash risks have been reduced simultaneously and consistently in

each and every one of the following areas: drinking/drugged drivers, fatalities without restraints, young drivers, drivers over 65, excessive speed, intersections, lane departures, pedestrians, and commercial vehicles. In only one area of traffic safety – motorcycles – are we negating our precious gains in safety culture. This repeal would create a debilitating negative influence on our performance-based safety effort in Michigan.

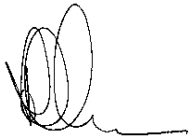
Right now we are surely seeing a resurgence in the economic prospects of Michigan's key automotive industries. With their close relationship to automotive prowess, our traffic laws need to demonstrate an active performance-based culture that retains a competitive position relative to other states. The proposed repeal of the universal helmet law would mark a reversal in our traffic safety standards, erode Michigan's legacy as a roadway safety leader, and strike a very discordant note.

Given our consistent attention to Michigan motor vehicle safety management and trauma response over many years, we are deeply disturbed by the negative consequences that would certainly result from the proposed repeal.

Based on evidence from other states, if this bill is passed, more Michiganders will lose their lives, Michigan's safety culture and legacy will be compromised, and an additional economic burden will fall on families, communities, and the state.

We therefore urge you to VETO this bill.

Sincerely,



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Motor Vehicle Safety Statistics for Michigan

1. Motorcycle-related fatalities in Michigan are not a problem of young motorcyclists or young passengers.

- Michigan motorcycle fatalities are most numerous between the ages of 25-54.
 - Nearly 70% of all Michigan motorcycle fatalities are in this age range.
 - Combined costs due to medical care and work loss are more than \$91.7 million per year for fatally injured Michigan motorcyclists.
 - The average cost per fatality for motorcycle crash victims aged 25-54 in Michigan is more \$975,000.
- The greatest economic impact is averted if adults are **not** exempt from mandatory motorcycle helmet laws.

2. Non-fatal motorcycle injuries are costlier than fatal injuries.

- Non-fatal motorcycle crashes are more prevalent than fatal crashes.
- The average cost for a non-fatal motorcycle crash is approximately 4 times that of a fatal crash.

Based on statistical evidence, what can be expected if the universal helmet law is repealed?

- More hospitalizations for motorcycle crash injuries.
- Increased number of survivors with traumatic brain injuries.
- More deaths of hospitalized motorcycle crash victims.
- Greater numbers of discharges of motorcycle crash victims to long-term care.
- Increases in fatality rates of up to 20%.
- Billions of dollars per year in costs passed on to the Michigan public in the form of higher insurance costs, lost taxes, and higher tax rates.