



Ohio Judicial Conference

The Voice of Ohio Judges

Judge Bradley J. Smith
Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 419
Senate General Government Committee
June 1, 2026

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear and members of the Senate General Government Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to submit proponent testimony for Senate Bill 419 on behalf of the Ohio Judicial Conference.

I am Judge Brad Smith of the Sandusky County Juvenile & Probate Court, where I have served since 2009. I am a former President of the Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges and member of the Juvenile and Probate Law & Procedure Committees of the Ohio Judicial Conference. Prior to being elected Judge I had a private law practice, and previously have served as a Sandusky County Commissioner, Assistant City Law Director/Prosecutor and a Fremont City Councilman.

On behalf of the OJC's Juvenile Law & Procedure Committee, I am testifying in support of S.B. 419, which lowers the age at which a juvenile may obtain a temporary instruction permit from age 15½ to 15 and expands the time a juvenile must hold a temporary instruction permit before eligibility for a probationary license from six months to one year. This bill does not amend the current requirement that juveniles must be at least 16 years old before they are allowed to sit for the driver's license exam. The bill simply lowers the minimum age for a temporary permit by six months.

A recent *Columbus Dispatch* article announced, "The '100 Deadliest Days of Summer' are here," highlighting the period between Memorial Day and Labor Day when more teen drivers are on the road. These summer vacation days are the deadliest for teen drivers, according to the National Road Safety Foundation. The article states:

Teen drivers are three times more likely to be in a fatal crash, and there is a sharp increase in fatal crashes involving teen drivers during this time frame, according to the foundation. There are multiple reasons for this spike: school is out, teens are inexperienced drivers, they drive distracted, they speed, or they drive under the influence, according to the foundation.¹

While summer may be the deadliest period for teen drivers, winter weather also multiplies the risk of accidents, especially for teenagers who are experiencing icy road conditions for the first time. Under current law, a teen driver may obtain a temporary permit at age 15½ and become eligible for a temporary permit at age 16 after six months of instruction. Regardless of when the juvenile receives their temporary

¹ Available at <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/traffic/2026/05/29/why-is-the-summer-a-dangerous-time-to-drive-for-teens/90299224007/> retrieved on May 31, 2026.

permit, the teen driver will not have been required to experience a full year of weather conditions before receiving a probationary license.

According to The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's compendium of graduated driver licensing laws, at least eight states require a twelve-month holding period for their states' youngest drivers, and another five states require a nine-month period. Additionally, the majority of states allow drivers to obtain an instructional permit at age 15 and some allow learning permits as early as age 14.²

By extending Ohio's instructional permit period, S.B. 419 will allow teenagers to begin practicing earlier and through additional weather conditions. This may reduce the amount of driving offenses in the juvenile courts, but more significantly, it should make the "100 Deadliest Days" less impactful by lowering the amount of fatal car crashes caused by teen drivers with little to no experience.

We thank Senator Gavarone for introducing this important legislation. I am available to answer any questions you may have.

² Available at <https://www.iihs.org/research-areas/teenagers/graduated-licensing-laws-table> retrieved on May 31, 2026.