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MADD, Parents of Drunk Driving Victims, Senator Hill, Traffic Safety Partners

Call for .05 BAC Law, Ignition Interlocks for All Offenders

SACRAMENTO (April 3, 2019) — Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and other parents who have lost their children to drunk driving today joined California Senator Jerry Hill and traffic safety partners in calling for a state law that lowers the threshold for impaired driving in California to .05 blood alcohol concentration (BAC). MADD also strongly supports Senator Hill's legislation that would require ignition interlocks for all drunk drivers, which would make California the 34th state with an all-offender ignition interlock law.

Senator Hill has authored SB 545, the Matthew Klotzbach Mandatory Ignition Interlock for DUI Offender Act of 2019. Matthew, 22, was riding home with his family after an outing when a drunk driver crashed into their car. Senator Hill also co-authored AB 1713, Liam's Law, with Assembly Member Autumn Burke. Liam's Law would lower California's DUI threshold to .05 blood-alcohol concentration. It is named in honor of 15-month-old Liam Kowal, who was killed after a hit-and-run drunk driver struck his stroller in a crosswalk.

"We are so grateful to Senator Hill for both of these initiatives. Passing ignition interlock laws for all offenders in every state is one of MADD's top priorities and the Matthew Klotzbach Law is long overdue in California," said MADD National Board Member Carol Leister. "We want to do everything we can to stop these tragedies. That's why MADD made the decision this year to support any state that seeks to lower the BAC threshold to .05. A cornerstone of MADD since our founding in 1980 is to prevent drinking and driving, which both of these laws will help accomplish."

Senator Hill is a longtime champion of drunk driving reform. He worked with MADD and the Klotzbach family for years to pass California's current ignition interlock law, which requires ignition interlocks for some, but not all, drunk driving offenders.

"The laws named in honor of Matthew Klotzbach and Liam Kowal will save lives," said Senator Hill. "Drunk driving and the death and injuries it causes are entirely preventable. There is no reason for another family to suffer the loss of a child and other loved ones. We have the tools and the means to stop these tragedies now."

Last month, Kentucky became the 33rd state to require ignition interlocks for all drunk driving offenders. If passed, the law named in honor of Matthew Klotzbach would make California the 34th state. Five other states are considering similar legislation to Matt's Law, including Michigan, South Carolina, Wisconsin, New Jersey, and Massachusetts.

"This legislation is personal. Matthew Klotzbach is my son. He is gone because a convicted drunk driver made the choice to drive drunk again – this time on a suspended license meant to keep him off the road," said Mary Klotzbach, Matthew's mother and former MADD National Board member who cofounded the Bay Area chapter of MADD and has worked with her husband Tom for 12 years on this legislation. "An ignition interlock law like the one authored by Senator Hill would have saved my son's life. Every drunk driving death is preventable. But this fact compounds the grief my family and I will live with for the rest of our lives."

Drunk driving is still the leading killer on our roads, and the numbers are going the wrong way. In 2017 alone, drunk driving killed almost 11,000 people — a 9 percent increase since 2014, when the number of people killed by drunk driving had dropped below 10,000.

Studies show that if all states lowered the impaired driving threshold to .05 BAC, more than 1,700 lives would be saved per year. In December, Utah became the first state in the nation with a .05 BAC law. New York, Michigan and Oregon are considering similar proposals this year.

"Few bills can be as scientifically and statistically proven to directly save lives as Liam's Law," said Marcus Kowal, Liam's father. "This law is for all innocent lives lost and for other families not to have to experience the devastation drunk driving causes."

The National Transportation Safety Board has included the .05 BAC threshold on its "Most Wanted List" of traffic safety recommendations for the past six years.

"Since 2013, the NTSB has advocated for a BAC of .05 or lower because it will save lives by encouraging people to separate drinking from driving. You can drink responsibly. You can drive responsibly. But you can't responsibly drink and drive," said NTSB Member Jennifer Homendy.

Said Alex Epstein, director of Transportation Safety for the National Safety Council: "We know we have to do more to change our culture and expectations around drunk driving. The science is clear on drinking and driving. Our countermeasures must reflect this."

Peter Kurdock, General Counsel for Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, agreed: "The data and research behind an all-offender ignition interlock device (IID) requirement and a .05 percent blood alcohol content (BAC) limit are crystal clear. These laws reduce drunk driving crashes, fatalities and injuries, and they are urgently needed. Advocates commends the leadership of Senator Jerry Hill and Assembly Members Autumn Burke and Heath Flora for sponsoring proven legislation to curb drunk driving on California roads. And, we urge the legislature to take swift action to stop these preventable fatalities."

Drunk diving killed 1,120 people in California in 2017, accounting for 31% of all traffic deaths. California consistently has the second highest number of drunk driving deaths in the country.

"AB 1713 will thankfully prevent about 10% of alcohol-related collision fatalities in California every year," said Bruce Lee Livingston, Executive Director of Alcohol Justice and a leader of California Alcohol Policy Alliance (CAPA). "We say, '[Point .05 saves lives!](#)'"

For more information on ignition interlocks, visit madd.org/interlock. For information on .05 BAC, visit madd.org/05.

About Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Founded in 1980 by a mother whose daughter was killed by a drunk driver, Mothers Against Drunk Driving[®] (MADD) is the nation's largest nonprofit working to end drunk driving, help fight drugged driving, support the victims of these violent crimes and prevent underage drinking. MADD has helped to save nearly 380,000 lives, reduce drunk driving deaths by more than 50 percent and promote designating a non-drinking driver. MADD's *Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving*[®] calls for law enforcement support, ignition interlocks for all offenders and advanced vehicle technology. MADD has provided supportive services to nearly one million drunk and drugged driving victims and survivors at no charge through local victim advocates and the 24-Hour Victim Help Line 1-877-MADD-HELP. Visit www.madd.org or call 1-877-ASK-MADD.