



Dear William:

Thank you for contacting me to express your concerns regarding the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration's efforts to improve motorcycle safety. I am pleased to learn your views on this issue and appreciate the opportunity to share mine.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) was established by the Highway Safety Act of 1970 to increase safety on our nation's highways and reduce deaths, injuries, and economic losses resulting from motor vehicle crashes. Its motorcycle safety program focuses on three areas: preventing crashes, preventing crash-related injuries, and limiting the seriousness of these injuries through appropriate emergency medical response.

Motorcycle helmets have been proven to significantly increase safety. According to NHTSA, a motorcyclist without a helmet is three times as likely to die in a crash as a motorcyclist wearing a helmet, and among motorcyclists who survive a crash, those not wearing a helmet is three times as likely to suffer a brain injury as those wearing a helmet. A recent study by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation found that the average cost resulting from a rider not wearing a helmet being injured in a crash is \$302,000, while the average cost resulting from a helmeted rider being injured in a crash is \$71,000.

In 1966 Congress passed legislation to withhold a portion of federal highway funds from any state that did not have a mandatory motorcycle helmet law by 1976. This penalty was repealed in 1996. Despite this change, NHTSA still considers universal helmet use to be vital to improving motorcycle safety. This position has led some to fear that NHTSA will lobby state legislatures to enact mandatory helmet laws. In response, Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) introduced H.Res. 1498, which would express the support of the House of Representatives for maintaining the current ban on NHTSA using federal funds to lobby state legislatures and urge NHTSA to increase motorcycle safety by focusing on accident reduction. H.Res. 1498 did not come to a vote in the 111th Congress, but I will be sure to keep your views in mind if similar legislation is introduced in the 112th Congress.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration's Motorcycle Law Enforcement Demonstration Grant Program has also raised concerns among some in the motorcycle community. This program is based on a successful program run by the state of New York and seeks to assess the effectiveness of using motorcycle only checkpoints to conduct vehicle safety and driver behavior inspections. Opponents of this program

argue that it unfairly targets motorcyclists while ignoring other drivers and the dangers they can pose to motorcyclists. NHTSA should continue to use evidence-based strategies to increase motorcycle safety and the safety of all on our highways.

Again, thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts. Please feel free to visit my website at [www.degette.house.gov](http://www.degette.house.gov). There you can sign up for my e-mail newsletter and stay up-to-date with events in Congress. I look forward to our continued communication.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diana DeGette". The signature is written in a cursive style with a blue ink color.

Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress