



**County  
Health Officials  
of New York**

Leading the way to healthier communities

# **SUPPORTS**

## **S.4799 Golden)**

### **AN ACT to amend the vehicle and traffic law, in relation to adding a bicycle and pedestrian safety component to the pre-licensing driver's education course**

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) supports the above-referenced legislative proposal, which would amend the vehicle and traffic law to include bicycle and pedestrian safety in the curriculum of the required pre-licensing driver's education course and the addition of one or more questions pertaining to bicycle and pedestrian safety on the pre-licensing test.

Pedestrian related motor vehicle accidents comprise 28% of motor vehicle fatalities in New York State which is more than double the national average. Of all pedestrian related accidents 22% involved children under the age of 18, and 18% of all pedestrian related fatalities are people over the age of 65. Pedestrian related accidents are most likely to occur outside of an intersection which is particularly true for children under the age of nine. Speed of the car has a positive correlation with fatality rates of pedestrians involved in motor vehicle accidents, speed playing a role in one third of all pedestrian related fatalities.

The majority of pedestrian accidents in New York State occur in New York City, although pedestrian related crashes in Upstate New York and Long Island are more likely to be fatal. Populations at risk for pedestrian related fatality and injury are those who rely on walking or riding a bike as a means of transportation including children, the elderly, and low income individuals. As part of a Public health initiatives supporting walking and cycling as part of a healthy lifestyle, along with environmental and economic benefits of walking or riding a bike, brings the benefit of increased numbers of walkers and cyclists sharing our roadways. Unfortunately, this increase often occurs in an infrastructure designed for vehicles, not pedestrians and bicyclists.

In New York State the comprehensive societal costs associated with pedestrian injuries and fatalities is approximately \$2.8 billion (as reported in 2008). These costs include not only medical costs but also, associated costs such as legal, administrative, travel delay, lost earnings, workplace costs, and pain and suffering. Further driver education to raise awareness of bike and pedestrian safety may reduce these costs, and most importantly, reduce injury and death.

At some point in each day, we are all pedestrians, sharing roadways and parking areas with drivers, and thus sharing both risk and responsibility to prevent pedestrian-related accidents. It is important that new drivers learn, from the start, about this shared responsibility. For the above stated reasons NYSACHO supports this legislation as it would increase the education and awareness of drivers with regard to pedestrians and appropriate measures to take as a driver to share the road.

NYSACHO Contact: Sarah Ravenhall, Executive Director, [sarah@nysacho.org](mailto:sarah@nysacho.org)