



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

## **Senator Fuschillo: New Law Raises Penalties for Teens Who Text and Drive**

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Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick), Chairman of the Senate's Transportation Committee, announced today that legislation to suspend the driver's licenses of teenage drivers who text or talk on a cell phone while driving has been signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo. The legislation was sponsored by Senator Fuschillo and Senator Carl Marcellino.

"The obsession and addiction of using cell phones in cars endangers the lives and safety of every driver on the road; it has to stop. This new law will reinforce the message that distracted driving is serious and dangerous and that a driver's focus should be on the road, not their cell phone, when they are behind the wheel. I am pleased to have worked with Governor Cuomo on this legislation and applaud him for signing it into law," said Senator Fuschillo.

Under the law, teens with a junior driver's license would have their license suspended for sixty days each time they commit a distracted driving violation. Teens and other newly licensed drivers who commit a distracted driving offense within the first six months of receiving their regular driver's license would face a sixty day license suspension for their first offense. Those who commit a subsequent offense within six months of having their license restored would face a six month license suspension. In each instance, the suspensions would be in addition to any other applicable penalties, including five driver license penalty points and monetary fines.

Distracted driving is a widely prevalent problem among teenagers. A survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found that in 2011, 45% of all students ages 16 and older reported to texting or emailing while driving at least once in the past 30 days. Distracted drivers are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash than a non-distracted driver, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens, and teen drivers ages 16 to 19 are three times more likely than drivers aged 20 or older to be in a fatal crash, according to the CDC.

The law took effect immediately after it was signed.