



6/14/13

Joint Committee on Elder Affairs
Room 513 and 167
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Sen. Jehlan, Rep. O'Day and Members of the Committee on Elder Affairs:

We, the undersigned, represent a wide range of constituencies who have come together to urge The Joint Committee on Elder Affairs to report out favorably, House Bill 550: An Act Authorizing the Establishment of Senior Citizen Safety Zones.

Regular exercise, like walking, may be one of the best ways to help reduce brain atrophy and cognitive decline. **Walking five miles a week was found to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's by 50%.** [*Neurology*, 2010] On average, people who became active later in life improved their life expectancy by 1.6 years [Harvard Alumni Study, 2000]. In addition to great health benefits, walking is an inexpensive, easy form of transportation, which allows seniors to remain independent, when driving is no longer an option.

Yet, senior citizens are at a higher risk of being struck by vehicles than other people. The health impact to pedestrians struck by cars is exponentially higher as vehicle speed increases. Slowing traffic in areas where vulnerable populations, like seniors, are in greater concentration can have significant health and safety benefits.

By giving municipalities the opportunity to establish reduced speed Senior Safety Zones [modeled after School Zones and Work Zones], this bill will provide a layer of protection for a population that relies disproportionately on walking as a means of transportation. The Bill will help give senior citizens in Massachusetts safe opportunities to remain active and healthy.

By supporting the establishment of senior citizen safety zones, you are ensuring that senior citizens in high-risk areas are considerably safer from the dangers of fast vehicles. The act requires minimum expenditures: it simply provides municipalities with the option of enacting Senior Safety Zones as they see fit.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director
WalkBoston

David Watson
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MassBIKE

Lewis Howe
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MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE

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