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Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety Public Hearing  
Testimony from Rep. William Penterman in favor of SB 653

Good afternoon Chairman Wanggaard and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of Senate Bill 653, relating to penalties for certain traffic violations where highway maintenance workers are present and providing a penalty.

This bill was inspired by a bill from the last legislative session. In 2018, Girl Scout Troop 3055 from the Eau Claire area was taking part in Wisconsin's Adopt-a-Highway program, picking up trash along the side of the road. Their community service was cut short when a driver hit the group, killing three girls and one adult. Volunteers who clean our state and county highways as part of the Adopt-a-Highway programs deserve to be protected as they perform this service to our communities.

To help improve the safety of these Adopt-a-Highway volunteers, this legislation doubles the fines for motorists who fail to follow traffic laws through the designated cleanup area. This bill will not fix everything, but it will help encourage drivers to look out for volunteers working on the sides of the roads. SB 653 is based on 2019 AB 151. It has bi-partisan support.

Every day, selfless individuals give back to their community. Volunteering to clean roadsides and ditches is one of the ways many people do just that. In this small way, we can protect these volunteers so they can keep doing well in their communities.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.