

that we will be safe on our highways? I only wish we could find some magical instant solution to the problem. So far, all the mechanical improvements on automobiles, all the highway improvements, all the strengthening of our traffic safety laws have not been able to curb our rising number of highway deaths and injuries. Thus, the answer must lie with you, the drivers. It has been found that four of five traffic accidents are due to driver errors. Driver errors—not faulty automotive equipment or bad road conditions—but avoidable bad judgment on the part of our motorists.

You, as the young drivers of our State, will be subjected to these conditions when you venture out on our public thoroughfares. You will be faced with reckless drivers who pass on curves, exceed speed limits and drink while driving. Will you join them in their deadly game? Or will you be able to exercise good judgment and survive? Again, I say, the choice is up to you. Only by being a mature, knowledgeable driver, with full control of your vehicle and awareness of the responsibilities of driving, will you be able to remain a living human being and not a statistic.

The odds are in your favor. As teenagers, you have all the natural-born assets that contribute to good driving skills. You have good vision and hearing, above average coordination and fast reflex timing. With these God-given faculties, you should be the best drivers on our roads, if—and I stress the “if”—if you develop now the good judgment and favorable attitudes toward the privilege and responsibility of driving. You and other teenagers like you have many long years ahead of you as Maryland motorists. It is my fervent hope that these years will not be marred for you by needless highway tragedies. Therefore, in an attempt to instill within you at this early age the concepts of good driving attitudes and practices, the General Assembly this year passed a bill requiring the youth of our State to complete thirty hours of driver education courses before obtaining drivers licenses. In this way, we hope you will learn from the very beginning the proper methods of safely handling a motor vehicle. You will learn driving skills from qualified teachers rather than from a parent or friend who might unknowingly pass along poor driving habits. By requiring you to take this course, we are not saying that you are bad driving risks. Rather, we are trying to instill within you good driving attitudes and skills right from the start, so that you will begin your driving career with the proper motivations and hopefully will continue to be the safe motorists of Maryland’s future.

I feel certain that the young men and women I am addressing today will be among that group which Marylanders can point to with pride as