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Evan Semoffsky and Gwendolyn Wu

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New standard for sobriety?

A new bill to lower the state's blood-alcohol limit for driving, also known as Liam's Law, is making the rounds in the California Legislature.

State Sen. Jerry Hill, D-San Mateo, and Assemblywoman Autumn Burke, D-Inglewood, co-wrote Assembly Bill 1713, which proposes dropping the blood-alcohol limit from 0.08 to 0.05 of a percent. Hill, who has written several bills around impaired driving in the state, said the law was inspired by Liam Kowal, a 5-year-old boy killed by a drunken driver in Southern California.

"I feel the pain of the thousands of killed, tens of thousands injured every year. It's irresponsible for society," Hill said.

The National Transportation Safety Board has recommended that states lower the blood-alcohol limit to 0.05, citing the lower number of alcohol-related crashes in countries with stricter standards. Currently, Utah is the only state to adopt 0.05 as the legal limit.

"The effect is on consumer behavior and people will either find designated drivers who are not impaired, they will find alternative means of transportation or they will drink less," said Bruce Livingston, executive director of Alcohol Justice, a San Rafael nonprofit group monitoring the alcohol industry.

The bill, now in front of the Committee on Governmental Organization, would also add a clause tightening the limit to .04 for ride-service or taxi drivers when they have customers.