

Ross Hausfeld
Minot, North Dakota

Chairman Ruby and House Transportation Committee
North Dakota State Legislature
Bismark, North Dakota

March 3, 2023

Dear Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Transportation Committee,

I write in opposition of Senate Bill 2362 making seatbelt use a universal requirement in a motor vehicle as well as creating police power of primary enforcement. Seatbelt use is an excellent idea and there is no question using one lessens your chance of severe injury or death in the event of a collision or rollover. I wear mine every time I'm in a vehicle. It is my belief, however, that not every excellent idea needs to be legislated and stomped into existence with police checkpoints. Helpfully, and unfortunately, all of us today have an extremely recent and simple example to refer to in telling people to wear something 'or else'.

Allow me to refer to a few sobering statistics. According to the ND Department of Health & Human Services 1157 people passed away with primary cause listed as COVID-19 in 2020. In 2021, 595 passed. In that same year the 67th ND Legislature not only voted to ban statewide mask mandates; the Legislature voted in a 2/3rds Super-majority to override an attempted Veto of that bill. What I find strange is in the situation with masks one can make a clear connection that proper and universal usage protected other people and society at large far more than for oneself personally.

Seatbelts are in all relevant reference points the opposite. A personal decision to not wear one and suffer the consequences affects that person, not a crowded room spreading disease, and perhaps the emotional burden for close relations of a loved one lost. I remember the original arguments years ago behind the first seatbelt laws that the government had authority on this issue because unbelted people in motor vehicle crashes were putting an unnecessary and avoidable burden on the healthcare system. I will confidently say there has never been a healthcare system crisis approaching even 1% of the COVID-19 Pandemic because of a 'Pandemic of the Unbelted'. According to the ND DOT 41 persons who were not wearing seatbelts perished on our roads in 2020. In 2021 that number was 43. Road fatalities are down 42% from 10 years ago so I question why this is now suddenly a hot topic and police checkpoints are the only way forward, if some others are to be believed. Roughly two-thirds of motorcycle deaths are unhelmed each year, shall the citizens of North Dakota expect a universal helmet bill in 2025? The Legislature can keep mandating "excellent personal behavior ideas" forever, there will always be more. We can look to many other states to see it never ends up being enough for some people. Thank you for your time and consideration on this bill.

Sincerely, Ross Hausfeld