



House Transportation Committee

March 9, 2023 by Theresa Liebsch, Vision Zero - Occupant Protection Committee

In Support of SB 2362

Good afternoon Chairman Ruby and House Transportation Committee.

My Name is Theresa Liebsch, and I am a Vision Zero Outreach Regional Coordinator - but I come before you today as a committee member representing Vision Zero's Priority Emphasis Team in the area of occupant protection.

The occupant protection committee strongly supports SB 2362. The Primary Seatbelt bill has been in front of this committee before. In years past this committee has challenged the committee I represent to do more. You asked our occupant protection committee to do more education, with the hopes that education will equate to more people wearing seatbelts.

I'm proud to report we have done the education. Much of the education has been delivered by myself and by the three other vision zero coordinators in the state through the vision zero initiative. Our educational efforts have been recognized by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration - calling it a model program, with our Program Director, Ryan Gellner, being asked to present on North Dakota's traffic safety educational efforts at national conferences and conventions. We provide some of the best education in the nation, but, I'm here to tell you - it's not enough - we need your help with a primary seatbelt law.

Legislators have commented that if we made the roadways safer - we would decrease injuries and fatalities, and a primary seatbelt law wouldn't be needed. Billions of dollars of improvements later - we still need your help with a primary seatbelt law. For no cost - you can implement a primary seatbelt law that will significantly decrease serious injuries, and lower fatalities.

Today, I ask this committee to listen to the experts in this room... men and women that have committed their work to making North Dakota's transportation system efficient and safe. The experts on transportation and safety are in the room or have submitted testimony. I urge - no matter how you've voted on this bill in the past, that you listen to the experts and the facts and the data that they will supply.

The Primary Seatbelt law is NOT a new law. Our committee is simply asking the Legislature to update a law that's already in the books. We're asking to simply strike 14 words from an outdated law that will take us from secondary enforcement to primary enforcement and require everyone in the vehicle to buckle up... if you help us by doing that - we will save 5-7 lives per year in North Dakota. I'll repeat that. You can save 5-7 lives next year by simply pushing a green button.

I understand much of your decision on SB 2362 comes down to personal freedoms. I will remind you that driving is a privilege and not a right. To drive a motor vehicle - you must obtain a driver's license... and that comes with rules. Rules all of us follow every single day.

There is a law to stop at stop signs. There are laws on how fast you can drive. There are laws telling us where we can... and cannot park. Outside of traffic safety - we mandate what color a person has to wear when they are hunting, and how many fish they can keep while fishing.

We take away personal freedoms every single day - for the good of our society.

Because this bill will reduce deaths and injuries, It's not a loss of freedom. It's a chance at life.

Once again - I urge you to listen to the experts in the room today and pass SB 2362.

With that - I stand for Any Questions.