



**House Transportation Committee
SB 2362
March 9, 2023**

Chairman Ruby and Committee Members, I am Courtney Koebele, the Executive Director of the North Dakota Medical Association. The North Dakota Medical Association is the professional membership organization for North Dakota physicians, residents, and medical students.

NDMA supports SB 2362. A Primary Belt Law (PBL) is an evidence-based strategy to move North Dakota toward zero motor vehicle crash deaths. Unfortunately, North Dakota's seat belt use is below the national average. According to ND Department of Transportation, more people die in motor vehicle crashes in North Dakota from being unbelted than other common contributing crash factors such as drunk driving, distracted driving, or speeding.

North Dakota's observed seat belt use rate has been consistently lower than the national seat belt use rate over the past 10 years (2012-2021).^{3, 4}

**North Dakota vs. United States
Seat Belt Use Rate, 2012-2021^{3, 4}**



This bill will help North Dakotans. Research shows that states that transitioned to a PBL have experienced up to a 10-12 percent increase in their observed seat belt use. (NHTSA)

From a medical standpoint, unbelted crash victims have expensive medical bills:

- Unbelted crash victims have medical bills 50% higher than belted crash victims. (Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)
- Data from 16 of 42 North Dakota hospitals shows that costs related to unbelted motor vehicle crash injuries were more than \$206.6 million over a three-year period (2019-2021).

| Costs | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Inpatient Costs | \$43,895,360.53 | \$47,400,848.34 | \$51,258,474.73 |
| Outpatient Costs | \$20,617,207.33 | \$19,833,256.06 | \$23,594,689.69 |
| Total Costs | \$64,512,567.86 | \$67,234,104.40 | \$74,853,164.42 |

This bill does not infringe on an individual’s liberty any more than other traffic laws. The “personal choice” not to use a seat belt comes at a cost to all North Dakota taxpayers. The public pays the cost for emergency response, medical assistance, increased insurance premiums and unemployment compensation.

This bill will save lives. We urge a DO PASS on SB 2362.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.