

My name is Cole Just. I am an 8th grade student at LaMoure High School. I recently passed my permit test so I now have the privilege of being a new driver in North Dakota. I'm also a member of the LaMoure School Vision Zero student leadership team.

I want to tell you a little bit more about myself. On the football field, I wear a football helmet. When I hunt, I wear blaze orange. On the farm, I wear a dust mask when going into a grain bin. When I ride my dirt bike, I wear a helmet. When I'm in a car, I wear my seatbelt.

Why do I do these things related to safety? I want to grow up and become the 4th generation to farm and ranch near Berlin.

When I turn 18, I still plan to wear my football helmet while playing football. When I turn 18, I still plan wear blaze orange. When I turn 18, I still plan to wear a dust mask when going into a grain bin. When I turn 18, I still plan to wear a helmet when I'm riding my dirt bike. When I turn 18, I still plan to buckle up as a driver or passenger.

Why will I keep doing these safety things? Because I know these things will help keep me safe and alive.

Right now, North Dakota law allows for primary enforcement of restraint use for minors under the age of 18. We have data to prove the fact that minors are buckling up in our state! Why not make it primary enforcement so everyone continues to buckle up even after they turn 18?! We know the more people that buckle up, the more lives that will be saved.

I might just be 14 years old, but I am old enough to realize that the decision for you to wear your seatbelt doesn't just affect YOU.

If you decide not to wear your seatbelt and you're thrown from your vehicle during a crash... the chances of being killed are 4 times greater and your death doesn't just affect you and your family. It can affect me and my family too. Your decision NOT to buckle up can affect every EMS provider – like my mom who you heard talk earlier, every firefighter, and every law enforcement responding to that scene. They have to go home after seeing the worst of the worst and pretend nothing happened and can't talk to us about it. Trust me, I've seen this firsthand - that's not easy for them to do.

Also....if you choose not to wear your seatbelt, you are a danger to others if you're all involved in a crash. Unbuckled passengers can become a projectile and increase the risk of hurting or killing others in the vehicle by 40%.

I'm just a kid and I'll admit that I don't know it all - but you can trust me on this. Senate Bill 2362 will help save lives in North Dakota.

Thank you for your time.