
Good morning, Chairman Ruby and members of the House Transportation Committee. I am Dawn Mayer, and I am the Child Passenger Safety Program Director in the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services. I am here to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2362. As part of my position, I coordinate child passenger safety trainings statewide for professionals and teach occupant protection. Occupant protection refers to safety features designed to protect motor vehicle occupants in a crash.

In my position, I have heard misconceptions about surviving a crash. One of those misconceptions relates to restraint force. Some people think that using their arms to brace themselves or another occupant in the vehicle is an effective means to prevent injury during a crash. The restraint used needs to be strong enough to prevent injury from the forces in a crash. The restraining force is calculated by taking the weight of a person, times the speed of the vehicle in a crash. For example, if a person weighs 150 pounds and is involved in a 30-mph crash, a person would need to be able to restrain about 4,500 pounds of force.ⁱ This provides an important illustration of why seat belts are a critical component of occupant protection, reducing death and serious injuries due to crashes.

In addition to the impact on human life, there is also an economic cost for North Dakotans.

- North Dakota hospitals incurred \$206 million over a three-year period (2019-2021)ⁱⁱ in costs related to unbelted motor vehicle crash injuries. This represents only a portion of total hospital costs due to reporting from only 16 of North Dakota's 42 hospitals.
- Unbelted crash victims have medical bills that are 50% higher than belted crash victimsⁱⁱⁱ.

A primary seat belt law is an evidence-based strategy to help move North Dakota toward zero motor vehicle crash deaths. One death on North Dakota

roads due to not wearing a seat belt is one too many. To prevent death from motor vehicle crashes, everybody needs to wear a seat belt - every trip, every time.

Thank you for allowing me to appear before you today. I would be happy to respond to any questions.

ⁱ Safe Ride 4 Kids

ⁱⁱ NDHHS Data

ⁱⁱⁱ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration