

BEULAH POLICE DEPARTMENT

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DATE: March 8, 2023

TO: Chairman and Transportation Committee Members

FROM: Chief Frank A. Senn,
Beulah Police Department

SUBJECT: SB2362

Mr. Chairman and members of the Transportation Committee, My name is Frank Senn, I am currently the Chief of Police for the Beulah Police Department. I have been in Law Enforcement for approximately 28 years. I have been employed with the Beulah Police Department for approximately 23 years. I have been an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) for approximately 15 years. I current work part time with two separate Ambulance Services, Killdeer Area Ambulance and Mercer County Ambulance.

To start...SB2362 is not a Law Enforcement Bill. Law Enforcement supports this because it addresses a key issue, SAFETY. SB 2362 changes enforcement from secondary to primary, Changes the requirement for seat belt use from front seat occupants to All occupant with the fine for a violation remaining at \$20.

What makes this a great bill: SAFETY. More people die in motor vehicle crashes in ND from being unbelted than other common contributing crash factors such as drunk driving, distracted driving, or speeding. Over the past 5 years (2017-2021), 522 people died on ND roads. Of those people killed in car crashes where seat belts apply (excluding motorcycles, bicyclists and pedestrians) 51% were not wearing a seat belt. These people lost were Dads, Moms, Sons, Daughters, Grandparents, Grandchildren. People we LOVE.

Unbelted motor vehicle crash deaths are preventable. According to NTHSA seat belts reduce the risk of death and serious injury by 45 to 50 percent.

There are some misconceptions about the enforcement of this bill. Yes, an officer can pull a vehicle over if there is CLEAR evidence of the occupants not wearing a seatbelt, however this is more difficult than it many would think. With current laws allowing for tinted window (50% driver compartment windows and 100% rear passenger compartment windows), vehicle mechanics (seatbelts built into the seat) and Law Enforcement needing ascertain evidence with vehicles in motion, there are more complications of just pulling vehicles over to pull them over.

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I have been witnessd to the senseless loss of life from unrestrained occupants of a motor vehicle. One specific accident has set the course of my career. As a 17 years old high school graduate, I lost my best friend to a motor vehicle accident. On a late spring night, my best friend set into motion a number of events that would cost him his life and affect me for the rest of mine. A simple act, "Putting on his seatbelt". My best friend was found on the passenger side floor board after his vehicle struck a culvert and caught fire. My best friend had died. An end to a Father's legacy. A Mothers aspiration. A Friends admiration.

In Law Enforcement and Emergency Services, I often say I can fix a lot of things. I can educate, I can counsel, I can advocate, but I can't fix death. As much as I can try. I just can't fix death. I have been witnessd to colleagues leaving the two industries I Love because of senseless motor vehicle accidents where people have lost their lives or their futures because of serious injuries.

Please Recommend a DO PASS for SB2362.

Sincerely,



Chief Frank A. Senn

Beulah Police Department