
Good morning, Chairman Clemens and members of the Senate Transportation Committee. I am Dawn Mayer, and I serve as the Child Passenger Safety Program Director in the Division of Public Health of the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (Department). 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 the event of a crash.

The use of seat belts is 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.

- In 2018, the total cost of traffic deaths in North Dakota was \$152 millionⁱ.
- 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 the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

ⁱ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

ⁱⁱ NDHHS Data

ⁱⁱⁱ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration