



## Highway Department

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To: North Dakota Senate Transportation Committee  
From: Leah Kelm  
Date: February 2, 2023  
RE: Testimony IN FAVOR of SB 2362

North Dakota Senate Transportation Committee,

In the last 9 months, I have spent almost 2000 hours educating literally thousands of North Dakotans. The other three Vision Zero Coordinators throughout the state have done the same. We often work nights, weekends, and over 40 hours each week in our salaried positions, not just because it is our job, but because it is our passion to provide traffic safety education throughout our regions. We are not alone in this outreach; Our EMS, law enforcement, public health, and many others are also educating on the importance of seat belts. However, we need **YOUR** help. Education is just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to saving lives from motor vehicle fatalities. By simply changing the current law from secondary to primary enforcement, we will have an immediate and significant impact on reducing motor vehicle crash deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

Throughout the state, we present to everyone from North Dakota's kindergarteners to senior citizens. Whether you are 5 or 95 years old, the one piece of education that is universal to every age is to click that seat belt and buckle up. Crashes do not discriminate. Not wearing a seat belt in a motor vehicle can be lethal to anyone.

The other three Vision Zero Coordinators and myself hear it all the time – "I was in a crash, and the only reason I am here today is because I was buckled up." and "I lost someone I know because they chose not to wear to seat belt." or "I responded to a crash and had to walk through the median searching for an ejected body."

Based upon community efforts, I know North Dakotans want this law updated. In the past 7 days, I have gone from educating Rural Fire and EMS in Richland County to having a booth at a University of Jamestown Men's Basketball Game to meeting with students and their parents from LaMoure High School. The other three Vision Zero Coordinators and I are the ones out in our rural and urban communities in every county in our state, and seat belts are always a topic that come up.

Again, I cannot stress it enough – we **NEED** your help. Education is a key component, but without policy change, we can only do so much.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration of a "Do Pass" committee recommendation for **SB 2362**. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding my testimony or if you are interested in discussing the importance of a primary seat belt law further. Thank you for your service to the citizens of North Dakota.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leah Kelm".

Leah Kelm  
Vision Zero Coordinator (SE Region)  
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