

To: North Dakota Senate Transportation Committee

From: Kelli Just

Date: February 2, 2023

Re: Testimony IN FAVOR of SB 2362

North Dakota Senate Transportation Committee,

I wanted to write a letter that would stress the importance of a "Do Pass" on SB 2362. My first thought was to take the approach with statistics. I know you've all heard the numbers before but let me remind you of the following: According to the NDDOT, over the past five years (2017-2021), 522 people died on North Dakota's roads. Of those people killed in car crashes where seat belts apply (excluding motorcycles, bicyclists, and pedestrians) 51% were not wearing a seatbelt. More people die in motor vehicle crashes in North Dakota from being unbelted than other common contributing crash factors such as drunk driving, distracted driving, or speeding.

I could keep writing about statistics, but then I thought: What has convinced me to wear my seatbelt?

The answer to that question might be more powerful than statistics. It is because of my role as a volunteer EMT that I wear my seatbelt. I have been a Nationally Registered EMT for over 20 years in rural North Dakota and I am a member of the North Dakota EMS Association's Southeast Board of Directors. Being named the 2019 NDEMSA Provider of the Year was an honor like no other. I feel it is a great privilege and honor to serve my community as an EMS provider. I can provide pre-hospital care for my family members, friends, co-workers, and neighbors during some of their worst moments in life. This is extremely important as many of my neighbors are more than 45 minutes away from a hospital. As an EMT in rural LaMoure County, I have responded to some of the worst of the worst motor vehicle crashes. I have covered a person with a white blanket as he was lying in a ditch after being thrown from a vehicle crash while his wife was watching and crying beside me. I have done CPR on an unbelted, motor vehicle crash victim after they sustained chest trauma from flying into the dash of a pickup truck when it hit a tree. These scenes are ones I cannot erase out of my mind and knowing if these patients of mine would have been buckled up, their outcomes most likely would have been completely different.

Seatbelts do save lives. This is a fact. I am proud that our state is on the right track with programs like Vision Zero, but we need to continue our work help in ensuring North Dakotans stay safe on the roads. I sincerely appreciate your consideration of a "Do Pass" on SB 2362.

Thank you for your time and service to North Dakota.

*Kelli Just*

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