

Hello Chairman Ruby and members of the House Transportation Committee. My name is Mary Waldo and I am the North Dakota State Trauma Systems Coordinator for the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH).

Prior to my current role as the State Trauma Systems Coordinator, I served the public for eight years as a Registered Nurse (RN) in one of North Dakota's busiest emergency and trauma centers. Prior to that, I spent several years volunteering on a rural North Dakota ambulance service as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). I don't remember all of the patients I've lost over the years, but I do remember those whose lives ended because they did not wear a seatbelt.

For those of us who work in emergency medicine, whether pre-hospital or in an emergency department, the overwhelming sense of loss that comes with a preventable death lingers, sometimes for years. This emotional toll weighs heavily on the minds of emergency workers throughout the state, many of them volunteers in their rural communities, and it is often the reason that a great nurse or paramedic ultimately burns out and chooses a different career.

In North Dakota, every 11 days an unbelted vehicle passenger dies. Further, in 2020, nearly 70% of all motor vehicle fatalities were from unbelted occupants. Many of these are preventable deaths.

Seatbelts are an evidence based strategy that reduces motor vehicle deaths but need to be worn by every occupant, every time.

Thank you for your time.