

HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

March 18, 2021, 9:45 AM

North Dakota Department of Transportation

Karin Mongeon, Safety Division Director

SB 2121

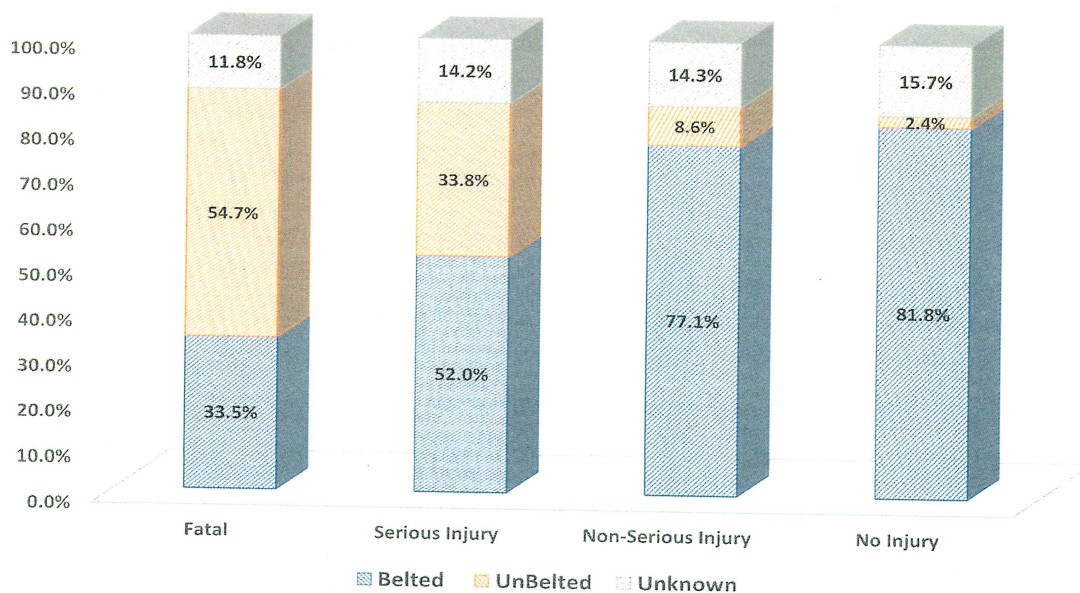
Good morning Chairman Ruby and members of the House Transportation Committee. My name is Karin Mongeon and I am the Safety Division Director for the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT). I am here this morning to provide information for SB 2121. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today.

SB 2121 would repeal section 39-21-41.5 of the North Dakota Century Code relating to secondary enforcement of safety belt requirements.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury-related death in North Dakota. More people die in unbelted crashes in North Dakota than other contributing crash factors including impaired driving, distracted driving, or speeding.

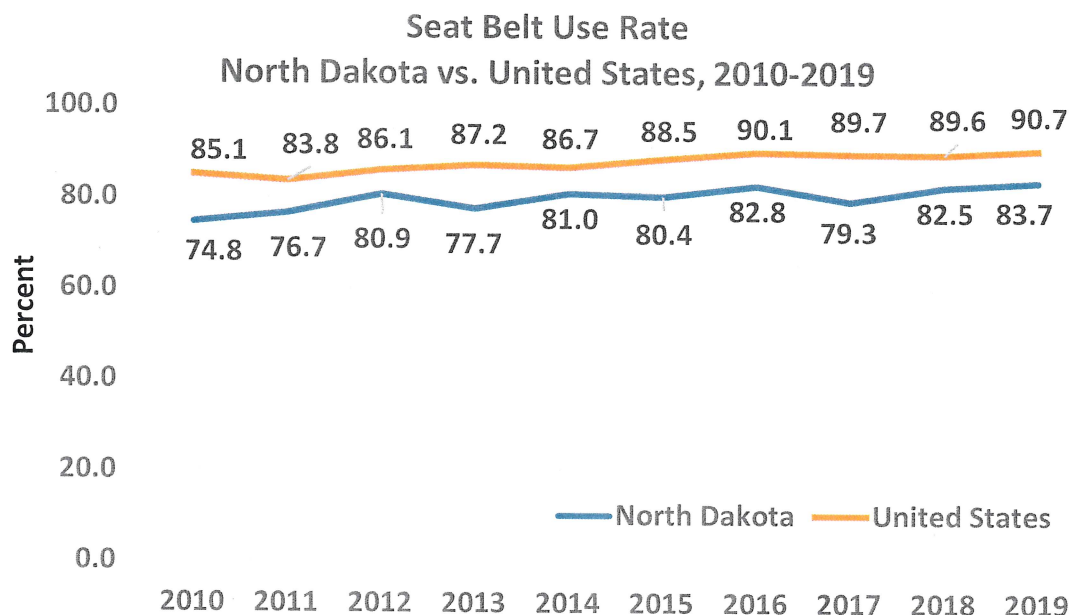
Crash data collected and analyzed by the NDDOT Safety Division shows that over the past five years (2015-2019), 565 people died in motor vehicle crashes. Of those killed where seat belts apply (excluding motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians), about 55 percent were not wearing a seat belt. This same data demonstrates in the chart below the direct correlation between seat belt use and injury severity. Unbelted vehicle occupants account for the largest percent of fatalities and serious injuries while belted occupants most commonly receive non-serious or no injuries. (Figure 1)

FIGURE 1
Percent of Restraint Use by Injury Classification
North Dakota, 2015-2019



An annual observational seat belt study conducted by North Dakota State University (NDSU) Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) on behalf of the NDDOT Safety Division shows North Dakota's seat belt use rate in 2019 was 83.7 percent. While this may appear high, it's the 16 percent who do not wear their seat belts – about 122,000 North Dakotans – who remain extremely vulnerable to the consequences of a crash. And, this 16 percent of non-seat belt users is contributing to more than half of North Dakota crash fatalities annually. Also, North Dakota's observed seat belt use rate has been consistently lower than the national seat belt use rate over the past 10 years. (Figure2) The national seat belt use rate from 2019 is 90.7 percent while North Dakota's most recent use rate is 83.7 percent.

FIGURE 2



Vision Zero

The NDDOT, along with the North Dakota Highway Patrol, is assigned responsibility for the public safety of road users. Both agencies take this responsibility very seriously and three years ago in January 2018 launched the *Vision Zero* strategy to reduce motor vehicle crash deaths and serious injuries in North Dakota to zero – along with the Governor's Office and other public and private sector partners.

Vision Zero has been very well-received and has the support and involvement of hundreds of stakeholders throughout North Dakota working together to apply evidence-based strategies proven to prevent severe motor vehicle crashes. A Primary Seat Belt Law (PBL) is among the evidence-based strategies identified in the North Dakota *Vision Zero* Plan as a priority strategy for implementation because it will have immediate and significant impact to reduce crash fatalities and serious injuries in North Dakota. Research shows that states that transitioned to a PBL have experienced a 10-12 percent increase in their observed seat belt use. (Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)

To demonstrate the effectiveness of PBLs, I've included Attachment 1 which clearly demonstrates that states that have a PBL have a lower percent of unbelted motor vehicle crash fatalities.

The citizens of North Dakota largely support a PBL. An annual study conducted by NDSU UGPTI on behalf of the NDDOT Safety Division shows that 6 of 10 North Dakota citizens support a PBL. Sixty-one percent of respondents to this survey favored a PBL in 2020 (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

Year	Percent in Favor of a PBL in North Dakota (Strongly Favored + Somewhat Favored)
2016	58%
2017	62%
2018	62%
2019	58%
2020	61%

The work we do in the Safety Division allows us to talk to many people about seat belt use. This has given us insight that those who do not wear their seat belt are often, at some point, influenced by a significant life event and begin to wear it. Often, the significant life event is having their first child, becoming a grandparent, or being in or knowing somebody who has been involved in a crash. The significant life event impresses upon them how precious life is and prompts them to begin to wear a seat belt. A PBL will promote seat belt use among those who would otherwise choose not to wear one until their life experiences convince them to wear one by choice.

Seat belts save lives. They are the single most effective traffic safety device to prevent death and injury in a motor vehicle crash. But all drivers and passengers must wear them for them to be effective.

This concludes my testimony and I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Thank you.

ATTACHMENT 1

Percent Unrestrained Motor Vehicle Crash Fatalities by State, 2018

State	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Law Type	Fine Amount	2018 Percent Unrestrained Fatalities
District of Columbia	93.0%	92.3%	95.2%	92.4%	87.5%	93.2%	95.5%	94.1%	93.6%	95.1%	Primary	\$50	12.5%
Oregon	96.6%	97.0%	96.6%	96.8%	98.2%	97.8%	95.5%	96.2%	96.8%	95.8%	Primary	\$130	26.3%
Michigan	98.0%	95.2%	94.5%	93.6%	93.0%	93.3%	92.8%	94.5%	94.1%	93.4%	Primary	\$25	28.4%
California	95.3%	96.2%	96.6%	95.5%	97.4%	97.1%	97.3%	96.5%	96.2%	95.9%	Primary	\$162	30.9%
Utah	86.1%	89.0%	89.2%	81.9%	82.4%	83.4%	87.2%	87.9%	88.8%	89.0%	Primary	\$45	31.8%
New York	88.0%	89.8%	90.5%	90.4%	91.1%	90.6%	92.2%	91.8%	93.4%	92.9%	Primary	\$50	32.6%
Washington	96.4%	97.6%	97.5%	96.9%	94.5%	94.5%	94.6%	94.7%	94.8%	93.2%	Primary	\$124	32.6%
Minnesota	90.2%	92.3%	92.7%	93.6%	94.8%	94.7%	94.0%	93.2%	92.0%	92.4%	Primary	\$100	33.1%
Iowa	93.1%	93.1%	93.5%	92.4%	91.9%	92.8%	93.0%	93.8%	91.4%	93.9%	Primary	\$128	34.8%
Maryland	94.0%	94.7%	94.2%	91.1%	90.7%	92.1%	92.9%	90.8%	92.1%	90.3%	Primary	\$83	35.6%
West Virginia	87.0%	82.1%	84.9%	84.0%	82.2%	87.8%	89.0%	86.8%	89.7%	90.5%	Primary	\$25	36.2%
Illinois	91.7%	92.6%	92.9%	93.6%	93.7%	94.1%	95.2%	93.0%	93.8%	94.6%	Primary	\$25	36.9%
Wisconsin	73.8%	79.2%	79.0%	79.9%	82.4%	84.7%	85.8%	88.4%	89.4%	89.3%	Primary	\$10	37.5%
Indiana	92.6%	92.4%	93.2%	93.6%	91.6%	90.2%	91.9%	92.4%	93.0%	93.4%	Primary	\$25	37.9%
Connecticut	85.9%	88.2%	88.4%	86.8%	86.6%	85.1%	85.4%	89.4%	90.3%	92.1%	Primary	\$92	39.0%
Texas	92.9%	93.8%	93.7%	94.0%	90.3%	90.7%	90.5%	91.6%	91.9%	91.3%	Primary	\$50	39.6%
North Carolina	89.5%	89.7%	89.5%	87.5%	88.6%	90.6%	89.9%	91.7%	91.4%	91.3%	Primary	\$161	41.1%
Hawaii	97.9%	97.6%	96.0%	93.4%	94.0%	93.5%	92.8%	94.5%	96.9%	97.8%	Primary	\$112	41.7%
New Jersey	92.7%	93.7%	94.5%	88.3%	91.0%	87.6%	91.4%	93.4%	94.1%	94.5%	Primary	\$46	42.3%
Tennessee	80.6%	87.1%	87.4%	83.7%	84.8%	87.7%	86.2%	88.9%	88.5%	90.9%	Primary	\$25	42.5%
Rhode Island	74.7%	78.0%	80.4%	77.5%	85.6%	87.4%	86.7%	87.5%	88.3%	88.8%	Primary	\$40	43.3%
Florida	85.2%	87.4%	88.1%	87.4%	87.2%	88.8%	89.4%	89.6%	90.2%	90.6%	Primary	\$30	44.2%
Georgia	88.9%	89.6%	93.0%	92.0%	95.5%	97.3%	97.3%	97.2%	97.1%	96.3%	Primary	\$15	44.4%
Nevada	91.0%	93.2%	94.1%	90.5%	94.8%	94.0%	92.1%	89.4%	90.6%	91.9%	Secondary	\$25	44.5%
Kansas	77.0%	81.8%	82.9%	79.5%	80.7%	85.7%	82.1%	87.0%	82.0%	84.0%	Primary	\$10	45.1%
Ohio	83.6%	83.8%	84.1%	82.0%	84.5%	85.0%	83.9%	83.8%	82.8%	84.9%	Secondary	\$30	45.6%
Oklahoma	84.2%	85.9%	85.9%	83.8%	83.6%	86.3%	84.5%	86.6%	86.9%	85.6%	Primary	\$20	46.4%
Alaska	86.1%	86.8%	89.3%	88.1%	86.1%	88.4%	89.3%	88.5%	90.1%	91.6%	Primary	\$15	46.8%
Arizona	80.8%	81.8%	82.9%	82.2%	84.7%	87.2%	86.6%	88.0%	86.1%	85.9%	Secondary	\$10	46.9%
Louisiana	74.5%	75.9%	77.7%	79.3%	82.5%	84.1%	85.9%	87.8%	87.1%	86.9%	Primary	\$25	47.3%
South Carolina	81.5%	85.4%	86.0%	90.5%	91.7%	90.0%	91.6%	93.9%	92.3%	89.7%	Primary	\$25	48.6%
Massachusetts	73.6%	73.7%	73.2%	72.7%	74.8%	76.6%	74.1%	78.2%	73.7%	81.6%	Secondary	\$25	49.0%
North Dakota	81.5%	74.8%	76.7%	80.9%	77.7%	81.0%	80.4%	82.8%	79.3%	82.5%	Secondary	\$20	49.3%
Maine	82.6%	82.0%	81.6%	84.4%	83.0%	85.0%	85.5%	85.8%	88.9%	88.5%	Primary	\$50	49.5%
Alabama	90.0%	91.4%	88.0%	89.5%	97.3%	95.7%	93.3%	92.0%	92.9%	91.8%	Primary	\$25	49.7%
Arkansas	74.4%	78.3%	78.4%	71.9%	76.7%	74.4%	77.7%	75.1%	81.0%	78.0%	Primary	\$25	50.6%
New Mexico	90.1%	89.8%	90.5%	91.4%	92.0%	92.1%	93.3%	92.3%	91.5%	90.2%	Primary	\$25	50.7%
Pennsylvania	87.9%	86.0%	83.8%	83.5%	84.0%	83.6%	82.7%	85.2%	85.6%	88.5%	Secondary	\$10	51.1%
Wyoming	67.6%	78.9%	82.6%	77.0%	81.9%	79.2%	79.8%	80.5%	84.8%	86.3%	Secondary	\$25	51.8%
Delaware	88.4%	90.7%	90.3%	87.9%	92.2%	91.9%	90.4%	91.4%	91.4%	92.4%	Primary	\$25	52.4%
Virginia	82.3%	80.5%	81.8%	78.4%	79.7%	77.3%	80.9%	79.0%	85.3%	84.1%	Secondary	\$25	53.1%
Idaho	79.2%	77.9%	79.1%	79.0%	81.6%	80.2%	81.1%	82.9%	81.2%	85.4%	Secondary	\$10	53.2%
Nebraska	84.8%	84.1%	84.2%	78.6%	79.1%	79.0%	79.6%	83.3%	85.9%	85.5%	Secondary	\$25	53.3%
Colorado	81.1%	82.9%	82.1%	80.7%	82.1%	82.4%	85.2%	84.0%	83.8%	86.3%	Secondary	\$71	53.6%
Kentucky	79.7%	80.3%	82.2%	83.7%	85.0%	86.1%	86.7%	86.5%	86.8%	89.9%	Primary	\$25	54.4%
Vermont	85.3%	85.2%	84.7%	84.2%	84.9%	84.1%	86.0%	80.0%	84.5%	89.8%	Secondary	\$25	56.9%
Mississippi	76.0%	81.0%	81.9%	83.2%	74.4%	78.3%	79.6%	77.9%	78.8%	80.2%	Primary	\$25	56.9%
Missouri	77.2%	76.0%	79.0%	79.4%	80.1%	78.8%	79.9%	81.4%	84.0%	87.1%	Secondary	\$50	58.0%
South Dakota	72.1%	74.5%	73.4%	66.5%	68.7%	68.9%	73.6%	74.2%	74.8%	78.9%	Secondary	\$25	63.2%
Montana	79.2%	78.9%	76.9%	76.3%	74.0%	74.0%	77.0%	76.0%	78.0%	86.6%	Secondary	\$20	64.4%
New Hampshire	68.9%	72.2%	75.0%	68.6%	73.0%	70.4%	69.5%	70.2%	67.6%	76.4%	None	\$0	69.6%
Nationwide	84.0%	85.0%	83.8%	86.1%	87.2%	86.7%	88.5%	90.1%	89.7%	89.6%			43.1%