

Chairman Clemmens and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

My name is Terry Weaver and I am the Traffic Safety Program Manager for the North Dakota Safety Council , a non-profit organization that is dedicated to preventing injuries and saving lives. Thank you for the opportunity to express the NDSC's support for Senate Bill 2121.

Just a thought to start us off thinking the same way about laws and safety. Hunters don't argue when we make them wear orange. They wear it for their safety – and they wear it to stay alive!

A PBL law has no cost and will save money.

- Unbelted crash victims have medical bills 50 percent higher than belted crash victims. (NHTSA)
- In the U.S., those who are not directly involved in crashes pay for nearly three-quarters of all crash costs, primarily through insurance premiums, taxes and congestion-related costs such as travel delay, excess fuel consumption and increased environmental impacts. In 2010, these costs, borne by society rather than by crash victims, totaled over \$200 billion. (NHTSA: <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812013.pdf>)
- The National Safety Council estimates the following average economic costs in 2018 for motor vehicle deaths and injuries. This is based on five economic cost components: (1) wage and productivity losses, which include wages, fringe benefits, household production, and travel delay; (2) medical expenses, including emergency service costs; (3) administrative expenses, which include the administrative cost of private and public insurance plus police and legal costs; (4) motor-vehicle damage, including the value of damage to property; and (5) uninsured employer costs for crashes involving workers.

Economic costs, 2018

Death \$1,659,000

Disabling Injury \$ 96,200

Evident Injury \$ 27,800

Possible Injury \$ 22,800

No injury observed \$ 12,200

Property damage only \$ 4,500

- All fines and fees collected for violations of traffic laws go to the North Dakota Common Schools Trust Fund

Currently, North Dakota's seat belt use rate is 83.7%. This means about 16% - or approximately 122,000 North Dakotans – remain extremely vulnerable to the consequences of a crash. This 16% is contributing to about half of North Dakota crash deaths annually. While some individuals consider seat belt use to be a personal choice that only affects them, it is a choice that affects nearly everyone - including North Dakota taxpayers. In the U.S., those who are not directly involved in crashes pay for nearly three-quarters of all crash costs. Lives are lost when seat belts are not used.

An argument is often made that it is an individual's right not to wear a seat belt – or even that driving is a right. But driving is a privilege, not a right. Individuals not meeting requirements set by state law are not allowed to drive a motor vehicle in ND. A few requirements include:

- Drivers must be licensed
- Drivers must obey speed limits and traffic laws
- Drivers may not use text messaging
- Drivers may not drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs

And seat belt use is also among the requirements for the privilege to drive.

The NDSC urges you to pass SB2121 because SEAT BELTS SAVE LIVES. A primary belt law (PBL) is an evidence-based strategy to move North Dakota toward zero motor vehicle crash deaths. It is a solution that comes at no cost to the state or residence and would increase usage without increasing enforcement. States that transitioned to a PBL have experienced a 10-12% increase in their observed seat belt use.

An argument is often made that it is an individual's right not to wear a seat belt – or even that driving is a right. But driving is a privilege, not a right. Individuals not meeting requirements set by state law are not allowed to drive a motor vehicle in ND. Existing requirements include:

- Drivers must be licensed
- Drivers must obey speed limits and traffic laws

- Drivers may not use text messaging
- Drivers may not drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs

Seat belt use is also among the requirements for the privilege to drive.

I appreciate the opportunity to express support for this important measure and urge a “Do Pass” recommendation by the committee.

Chairman Clemmens and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Terry Weaver
Traffic Safety Program Manager
North Dakota Safety Council