

Chairman Rust 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 (NDSC), 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.

Currently, North Dakota's seat belt use rate is 83.7% (NDDOT/NDSU UGPTI, 2020). 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's 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!

In 2020 (64%) of motor vehicle fatalities were unbelted.

- 53% of unbelted fatalities were partially or totally ejected.
- 77% of single vehicle rollover fatalities were not wearing their seat belt
- 81% of those unbelted rollover fatalities were either partially or totally ejected.

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.

Together, we can save lives and work toward making North Dakota the safest state in the nation. The next step we can make toward this goal is to increase seat belt use rates in North Dakota.

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

Sincerely,



Terry Weaver
Traffic Safety Program Manager
North Dakota Safety Council

We are dedicated to preventing injuries and saving lives.

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Seatbelts in North Dakota

North Dakota lacks a primary seatbelt law for all seats and all individuals. By adopting such a policy, many lives in North Dakota would be saved:

- 82.5% percent of North Dakotans wear seatbelts all the time – this is 7 percentage points less than the national average. States with a primary seatbelt law see more of their citizens wearing seatbelts all the time.
(<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812763>)
- 61% of occupants who died in passenger vehicles crashes in ND were unbelted. (this is much higher than the national average of 47%)
<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812691>
- Research has found that lap/shoulder seat belts, when used, reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent.
<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812691>
- In 2017 alone, seat belts saved an estimated 14,995 lives, including 44 people in North Dakota. If all North Dakotans wore seatbelts, an additional 18 lives could be saved.
<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812683>
- Wearing seatbelts saves money. One study looking at hospital costs found that there was an 84 percent decrease in costs when an injured occupant was wearing a lap shoulder belt versus being unbelted. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27177737>
- At 2010 usage rates, the deaths and injuries that result from nonuse of seatbelts was estimated to cost society an estimated \$10 billion annually in medical care, lost productivity, and other injury related costs.
<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812013>
- From Injury Facts: The total economic cost of fatal and nonfatal motor vehicle injury-related incidents in 2018 was \$445.6 billion. This includes employer's uninsured costs, vehicle damage, wage and productivity loss, and medical and administrative expenses.
<https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/all-injuries/costs/societal-costs/data-details/>
 - MV crashes costs ND \$706 million in 2010, which is \$1,049 per person.
<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812013>