

March 8, 2023

North Dakota House Transportation Committee &
House Members

Re: Support of Senate Bill 2362

My name is Amy Covington and I am from Grand Forks. I have worked in healthcare for many years and am also a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician and Instructor. I work with parents and grandparents often, showing them how to properly use their car or booster seats. I have presented in schools, teaching students about the importance of buckling up in their vehicles. I am often asked by those students, and sometimes adults, why it is not a law for adults to also be required to buckle up.

While I understand that wearing a seatbelt for front seat occupants IS the law in North Dakota, it is currently a secondary enforcement. This causes confusion for people who often think that "it isn't a law at all". Updating our North Dakota seatbelt law to a primary one would help eliminate that confusion and place emphasis on the importance of buckling up. I also know that having a primary law has led to a 10-12% increase in seat belt usage in other states that have passed a bill such as this. With our North Dakota seat belt usage very low (80-84%), we need effective policy in place to see that increase to closer to the national average of 90-94%. This bill would do just that and I hope you will support it.

Adding that back seat passengers are also required to wear their seatbelt (as per the proposed legislation) is also a critical update that is needed. Those occupants are just as much at risk as others in the vehicle and often times if unbuckled, can crash into and kill or injury other occupants. Given that frontal crashes are the most common, those in the back seat are inclined to end up being projected into the front seat.

Our law in North Dakota is in dire need of updating and I hope you will support Senate Bill 2362.

Amy Covington, CCPST-I

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