

Testimony - House Bill 1257

House Transportation Committee

Thursday – January 28, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

Safe Kids Grand Forks / Carma Hanson

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, my name is Carma Hanson. I am the Coordinator of Safe Kids Grand Forks. I am also a certified child passenger safety technician and have spent much of my career implementing effective strategies that prevent unintentional injuries and deaths, particularly in children.

Over the years, I have been a part of the statewide group of experts that gather routinely to create the North Dakota Vision Zero Plan. This plan is required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and is spearheaded by the North Dakota Department of Transportation. It includes members from several state agencies who are charged with making our North Dakota roadways safer and reducing traffic injuries and fatalities and reducing costs to taxpayers. In the past, experts have come together from areas such as law enforcement, traffic engineers, metropolitan planning organizations, county agencies, child passenger safety, emergency medical providers and others to create a strategy for making our North Dakota roadways safer. When our team gathers, we create a plan hoping to mirror the evidence-based outcomes proven successful in other states – **things that we know work**.

This bill is in direct opposition of any strategy that we know works and is effective. To be honest, it is nothing more than a retaliation of the bill that our stakeholders team has introduced that would make seat belt use a primary violation as opposed to a secondary one (Senate Bill 2121). You see, our team of people working to carry out the strategies of the North Dakota Strategic Highway Safety Plan, now called Vision Zero have carefully selected strategies that we know work as they have been implemented in other states with success.

While we did introduce that bill in the 2019 session (and it passed in the Senate and failed in the House), we know that the legislature has changed and that people are open to changing their mind as they see the progress that we are making in our death rates each year. In fact, the primary belt bill passed 24-23 in the Senate last time. This year, that vote changed to 28-18 (with one yes vote missing) with people moving from the red to the green column. While you can oppose that bill when it comes to the House chamber, thus keeping our seat belt law the same, it seems reckless as the House Transportation Committee to vote in support of a bill that would set our state back years in the progress we have made in saving lives.

The North Dakota's Department of Transportation, the Department in which you should be working with hand-in-hand, has on their home page the following mission: to **safely**

move people and goods across the state. There is nothing safe about removing a seatbelt requirement in our state.

Our stakeholders team, made up of many entities from across the state, were told that “if we introduced a primary bill again this session, that a group of legislators would introduce one to repeal seatbelts all together”. The fact that people would play politics with the lives of our ND citizens is sad. While you may not support that bill that will come before you after crossover, introducing a bill such as this is a reckless tactic and a slap in the face to those of us that have been tasked with making our roadways safer, saving money and saving lives in our state.

I thank you for allowing me to testify today in strong opposition of HB 1257.

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