

Good morning Chairman Ruby and members of the House Transportation Committee. My name is Dawn Mayer and I am the Child Passenger Safety Program Director for the North Dakota Department of Health. I am here to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 1257, relating to seat belt use.

As part of my job, I coordinate child passenger safety training statewide for professionals. A critical part of this training is teaching the values of occupant restraint systems for everyone, including those 18 years of age or older.

According to the National Safety Council, seat belts are the single most effective traffic safety device to prevent death and injury in a motor vehicle crash. Seat belts are effective in saving lives by:

- Keeping you in the vehicle. This is important, as you are 25 times more likely to be killed if you're thrown from a vehicle during a crash.
- Keeping you in control of your vehicle if forced to swerve or brake suddenly.
- Spreading the force of impact over a large surface area and the strongest parts of the body - your bones.
- Allowing your body to slow down gradually, lessening the impact on internal organs.
- Preventing impact with the interior of the vehicle, such as the steering wheel, dash or windshield, which increases your chance of remaining conscious after a crash.
- Preventing trauma to the brain and spinal cord caused by the sudden change in motion.
- Preventing collision with other occupants of the vehicle. If you don't wear a seat belt and are involved in a crash, other occupants in the vehicle are at risk of injury from you crashing into them.

In summary, motor vehicle crash deaths are preventable. Seat belt laws are evidence-based strategies for saving lives.

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