



**National Safety Council
The North Dakota Senate Transportation Committee
Testimony in Support of SB 2121
January 15, 2020**

The National Safety Council (NSC) respectfully asks you to support SB 2121, legislation that will require all motor vehicle occupants to wear seat belts.

NSC is America's leading nonprofit safety advocate and has been for over 100 years. As a mission-based organization, we work to eliminate the leading causes of preventable death and injury, focusing our efforts on the workplace, roadway and impairment. We create a culture of safety to keep people safer in the workplace and beyond so they can live their fullest lives. NSC has more than 15,000 member companies represent employees at more than 50,000 U.S. worksites, including 240 in North Dakota. NSC also has a Chapter– the North Dakota Safety Council – located in Bismarck.

SB 2121 expands the required use of seat belts to include all passengers in front and rear seats of all motor vehicles. Properly wearing seat belts in all seating positions reduces the risk of serious death and injury in a motor vehicle crash by about half.ⁱ

In 2019, 100 people lost their lives in North Dakotans in motor vehicle incidents.ⁱⁱ Insufficient seat belt use is responsible for too many of these fatalities. In 2017 alone, seat belts saved an estimated 14,955 lives nationally, including 44 people in North Dakota.ⁱⁱⁱ If all North Dakotans were properly restrained, an additional 18 lives could be saved.^{iv} Additionally 61% of unrestrained occupants in passenger motor vehicle crashes were killed in 2017 in North Dakota.^v The dangers of not wearing a seat belt in the rear seat are especially high. Nationally, 57% of all rear seat crash fatalities are unbelted.^{vi}

Lives are lost when seat belts are not used, and taxpayer dollars are lost as well. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that medical bills for unbelted crash victims are 55% higher than belted victims. Society bears the cost of an estimated \$10 billion annually from lack of seat belt use through increased taxes, insurance premiums and health care costs, lost productivity and other injury-related costs.^{vii}

NSC strongly urges you to support SB 2121. Moving this bill forward would be a strong signal that North Dakota prioritizes the safety of all its road users.

If you have any questions and Tara Leystra Ackerman, NSC State Government Affairs Manager at tara.leystra@nsc.org or 202-445-3121.

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/seatbelts/facts.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813060>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812683>

^{iv} Ibid

^v <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812691>

^{vi} <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812369.pdf>

^{vii} <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812013>