



**2021 SB 2121**  
**Senate Transportation Committee**  
**Senator Clemens, Chairman**  
**January 15, 2021**

Chairman Clemens and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, I am Tim Blasl, President of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA). I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 2121. I ask that you give this bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Hospitals are here today in support of this bill because we know that increasing seat belt use is critical to reducing injury and saving lives. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most drivers and passengers killed in vehicle crashes are unrestrained. Here are some other important points:

- Among drivers and front-seat passengers, seat belts reduce the risk of death by 45%, and cut the risk of serious injury by 50%.
- Seat belts prevent drivers and passengers from being ejected during a crash. People not wearing a seat belt are 30 times more likely to be ejected from a vehicle during a crash. More than 3 out of 4 people who are ejected during a crash die from their injuries.
- Seat belts save thousands of lives each year. Seat belts saved almost 13,000 lives in 2009. If all drivers and passengers had worn seat belts that year, almost 4,000 more people would be alive today.
- 53% of drivers and passengers killed in car crashes in 2009 were not wearing restraints.

Laws requiring seat belt use are either “primary” or “secondary” enforcement laws. Primary enforcement laws allow police officers to pull over drivers and issue tickets just because the drivers—or their passengers— aren’t wearing seat belts. Secondary enforcement laws, such as our current law, only allow police officers to issue tickets for seat belt violations if drivers have been pulled over for some other offense. Secondary enforcement significantly limits the ability to enforce seat belt laws. Rates of seat belt use are 9 percentage points higher in primary enforcement states than secondary states. If the overall prevalence of seat belt use in states with secondary enforcement laws had matched the higher prevalence in states with primary laws, an additional 7.3 million adults would have buckled up in 2008. A primary enforcement seat belt law covering all passengers will increase seat belt use and save lives.

For these important reasons, I urge you to give this bill a Do Pass recommendation. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Blasl, President, North Dakota Hospital Association