



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY



February 10, 2021

The Honorable Gayle Harrell, Chair
The Honorable Keith Perry, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Transportation
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

Dear Chairperson Harrell and Vice Chairperson Perry:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, law enforcement, medical and public health groups, and insurance companies working together to prevent motor vehicle crashes, save lives, reduce injuries and contain crash costs. KidsAndCars.org, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the safety of children in and around vehicles. Our organizations support Senate Bill (SB) 380 to strengthen Florida's child occupant protection statute.

This measure requires children to remain in a booster seat until at least age six and is a necessary improvement over Florida's current law. We urge you to further upgrade the law by extending the age requirement in the bill to eight and adding a height requirement of 57 inches before permitting the child to transition to the use of a seat belt in a rear seat. Children should remain in appropriate safety seats as long as possible, until they have aged out and outgrown the seat specifications. When children are properly restrained in a child safety seat that is suitable for their age and size, their chance of being killed or seriously injured in a car crash is greatly reduced.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for children in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)). On average, three children under age 14 were killed in traffic crashes each day in 2019 resulting in 1,053 fatalities, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). An additional 183,143 children were injured in crashes (NHTSA). Improperly restrained children traveling in vehicles present a serious public health problem, yet it can be addressed with a proven solution. Across all age groups, injury risk is lowest (less than two percent) when children are placed in an age-appropriate restraint in the rear seat.

Booster seat use reduces the risk for serious injury by 45 percent for children aged 4–8 years when compared with seat belt use alone.ⁱ Children in side-impact crashes benefitted the most from booster seats, showing a reduction in injury risk of 68 percent for nearside crashes and 82 percent for far-side crashes.ⁱⁱ Children should remain in a booster seat until they are able to be properly restrained by a seat belt in a rear seat, which usually occurs after attaining 57 inches in height. For older children and adults, seat belt use reduces the risk for death and serious injury by approximately half.ⁱⁱⁱ

We urge you to upgrade and advance SB 380 to improve child passenger safety in Florida and ensure the child restraint law keeps pace with research and best practices.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Janette Fennell, Founder and President
KidsAndCars.org

cc: Senate Committee on Transportation

ⁱ Arbogast KB, Jermakian JS, Kallan MJ, Durbin DR, *Effectiveness of Belt Positioning Booster Seats: An Updated Assessment*, Pediatrics, Vol. 124, Num. 5 (November 2009).

ⁱⁱ Id.

ⁱⁱⁱ NHTSA. Traffic safety facts, 2018 Data: Occupant Protection, June 2020, DOT HS 812 967. Available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812967>.