



July 10, 2024

The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair  
The Honorable Cindy F. Friedman, Vice Chair  
The Honorable Joanne M. Comerford, Assistant Vice Chair  
The Honorable Patrick M. O'Connor, Ranking Minority Member  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
24 Beacon Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Chair Rodrigues, Vice Chair Friedman, Assistant Vice Chair Comerford, and Ranking Minority Member O'Connor:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical, public health and law enforcement groups and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent crashes, save lives, reduce injuries, and contain costs, supports enactment of Senate Bill (S.) 2273 to enhance protections for child passengers by requiring them to ride in rear seats until age 13. This legislation will save lives by following best practices to ensure child passengers are restrained in the rear seat of vehicles.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for children in the United States.<sup>i</sup> An average of over three children under age 14 were killed and about 429 were injured every day in traffic crashes in 2022 – amounting to a total of 1,129 fatalities and an estimated 156,502 others injured.<sup>ii</sup> Improperly restrained children traveling in vehicles present a serious yet solvable public health problem. Use of appropriate child passenger safety seats is 47 percent effective in preventing fatalities for ages 1-3 in all crashes, 43 percent effective in preventing fatalities for ages 3-5 in all crashes, and 67 percent effective in preventing serious to critical injuries for ages 5-8 in all crashes.<sup>iii</sup> More than 325 lives were saved in 2017, the most recent year an estimate is available for, by restraining children four and younger in passenger vehicles.<sup>iv</sup>

To maximize the effectiveness of these protections, children should also be required to be appropriately restrained in the rear seat of vehicles. Front seats can be dangerous for children under 13 because air bags and seatbelts are designed for adults (in size and weight).<sup>v</sup> 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.<sup>vi</sup>

The improvement to the child passenger safety law in S. 2273 is consistent with the best practice identified by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and other experts. Advocates identifies requiring all children under 13 to ride in a rear seat as a critical traffic safety measure that every state should adopt.

We appreciate your consideration and urge you to advance and enact S. 2273, as well as support other occupant safety measures such as S. 1524/H. 2318 to add a requirement that children remain in rear facing safety seats until at least age two and S. 1521/H. 2395 to upgrade the seat belt law to primary enforcement, to help keep vulnerable children safe on Massachusetts' roads.

Sincerely,

Peter Kurdock, General Counsel

cc: Senate Committee on Ways and Means Members

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- i WISQARS, Leading Causes of Death Reports, 1981-2020, 2020, Top 10 leading causes of death, Ages 1 to 14, available at <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/fatal-leading>.
- ii Traffic Safety Facts 2022 Data: Children, NHTSA June 2024, DOT HS 813 575, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813575>.
- iii Evaluation of Child Restraint System Effectiveness, NHTSA, December 2020, DOT HS 813 047, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813047>.
- iv Traffic Safety Facts 2020: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data, NHTSA, Oct. 2022, DOT HS 813 375, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813375>.
- v Air Bags, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, available at <https://www.chop.edu/pages/air-bags>.
- vi Risk of Child Injury by Seat Row and Restraint Type, 1998-2002, Age 0-12 years, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, 2014. Available at [https://injury.research.chop.edu/sites/default/files/documents/seat\\_row\\_0.pdf](https://injury.research.chop.edu/sites/default/files/documents/seat_row_0.pdf).