



April 24, 2025

The Honorable Greg Gianforte  
Governor of Montana  
Office of the Governor  
State Capitol, Room 204  
P.O. Box 200801  
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte:

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, respectfully requests you sign into law House Bill (HB) 586 to enhance protections for child passengers. When children are properly restrained in a safety seat that is appropriate 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.<sup>i</sup> In 2023, 1,019 children ages 14 and younger were killed in traffic crashes, representing three children killed each day on average.<sup>ii</sup> This included 257 children three and younger and 210 children ages four through seven.<sup>iii</sup> In addition, 156,502 children were injured in traffic crashes in 2022, which equals about 429 each day on average.<sup>iv</sup>

Crash outcomes involving improperly restrained child passengers present a serious yet fixable public health problem. 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>v</sup> 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>vi</sup> More than 325 lives were saved in 2017, the most recent year for which an estimate is available, by restraining children four and younger in passenger vehicles.<sup>vii</sup>

HB 586 will improve the current child passenger safety law by requiring children to be in rear facing safety seats through age two, children ages two to four to be in a rear facing or forward facing child safety seat, children ages four to eight to be in a forward facing child safety seat or booster seat and children who are nine years old or have outgrown a booster seat to be secured by a seat belt.

We appreciate your consideration and ask you to sign HB 586 into law to enhance the safety of our most vulnerable passengers.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

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- i. WISQARS, 10 Leading Causes of Death, United States 2022, available [here](#), last queried Sept. 2024.
  - ii. Fatality and Injury Reporting System Tool (FIRST), NHTSA, Query for Persons Killed in Fatal Crashes, Years 2021-2023, By Age and Crash Year, queried Apr. 9, 2025, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/query>.
  - iii. Fatality and Injury Reporting System Tool (FIRST), NHTSA, Query for Persons Killed in Fatal Crashes, Years 2021-2023, By Age and Crash Year, queried Apr. 9, 2025, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/query>.
  - iv. Traffic Safety Facts 2022 Data: Children, NHTSA Jun 2024, DOT HS 813 575, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813575>.

- v. 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).
- vi. Evaluation of Child Restraint System Effectiveness, NHTSA, December 2020, DOT HS 813 047, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813047>.
- vii. 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>.