



Safe Kids USA

June 29, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin
U.S. Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

On behalf of Safe Kids USA, I write to express our support for S. 1156, the *Safe Routes to School Program Reauthorization Act*, legislation that would strengthen and expand the federal Safe Routes to School program.

As you know, the Safe Routes to School program was established in the 2005 SAFETEA-LU transportation bill. Through the program, funding is awarded by state departments of transportation to help schools and community organizations, like our Safe Kids coalitions, carry-out pedestrian safety education programs and make infrastructure improvements, such as building sidewalks and crosswalks. The goal of the program is to promote safe bicycling and walking to and from schools throughout the country.

Teaching children safe walking practices, like using crosswalks, along with making physical improvements to the walking environment is critically important because pedestrian injuries are the third leading cause of unintentional injury-related death for children ages 1-14. Each year, approximately 626 children are killed in pedestrian incidents and children sustain almost 38,500 nonfatal pedestrian injuries annually.

Safe Routes to School programs have been associated with declines in pedestrian and bicycle crashes involving elementary school children. However, the federal Safe Routes to School program is only able to serve about 5 percent of schools. S. 1156 would authorize increased funding for the program, add a safe routes to bus stops component, and make other improvements that will ultimately ensure more communities can take advantage of Safe Routes to School.

We strongly support passage of the *Safe Routes to School Program Reauthorization Act* and we thank you for your leadership on this important safety initiative. If Safe Kids can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 662-4463 or Stephanie A. Russell, Public Policy Associate, at (202) 662-0608.

Sincerely,

Alan Korn
Executive Director