



January 23, 2009

The Honorable Jim Carlson  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Capitol Building, Room G-9  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

Dear Senator Carlson,

On behalf of Safe Kids USA, a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, I write to express our support for S.F. No. 99, legislation requiring children under the age of 8 and shorter than 4'9" to be properly secured in a child passenger restraint system when travelling in a motor vehicle. We thank you for your leadership on this critical safety issue.

As you may know, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children ages 2 to 14 in the United States. In 2006, approximately 568 children ages 14 and younger were injured and an average of 5 were killed *each day* in traffic accidents throughout the country.

Despite these statistics, Minnesota is one of only 6 states that do not require children older than 4 to be properly restrained on their state's roadways. Minnesota's current law requires children to be secured in a child safety seat only through age 3. That means that in Minnesota, a 4-year-old child can be restrained in a seat belt engineered for an adult. This is a risky proposition. A study published in 2003 showed that the odds of injury in a motor vehicle crash were 59% lower for children ages 4 to 7 who were secured in belt-positioning booster seats than for those who used seat belts alone. In the study, the booster seat users had no injuries to their abdomens, necks, spines, backs, or lower extremities, while the seat belt users had injuries to all body regions.

Transportation experts agree that booster seat use by older children is a critical safety intervention. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommends that states require children to use child restraint systems and booster seats up to age 8. This is one of the NTSB's "Most Wanted" transportation safety improvements for states. Twenty-four states currently meet or exceed the NTSB's recommendation.

Further, if passed, this legislation would not only better protect the state's children, but would also enable Minnesota to apply for federal grant funds through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), for which Minnesota is currently ineligible. NHTSA provides grant funds to states to support enforcement of child passenger safety laws, but states must cover children to age 8 in order to be eligible for those funds.

We thank you for authoring legislation that will close this dangerous gap in Minnesota's law. 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  
Director of Public Policy & General Counsel