



May 5, 2015

Honorable Bill Shuster  
Chairman  
House Committee on Transportation  
& Infrastructure  
2251 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Peter A. DeFazio  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Transportation  
& Infrastructure  
2163 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster and Ranking Member DeFazio:

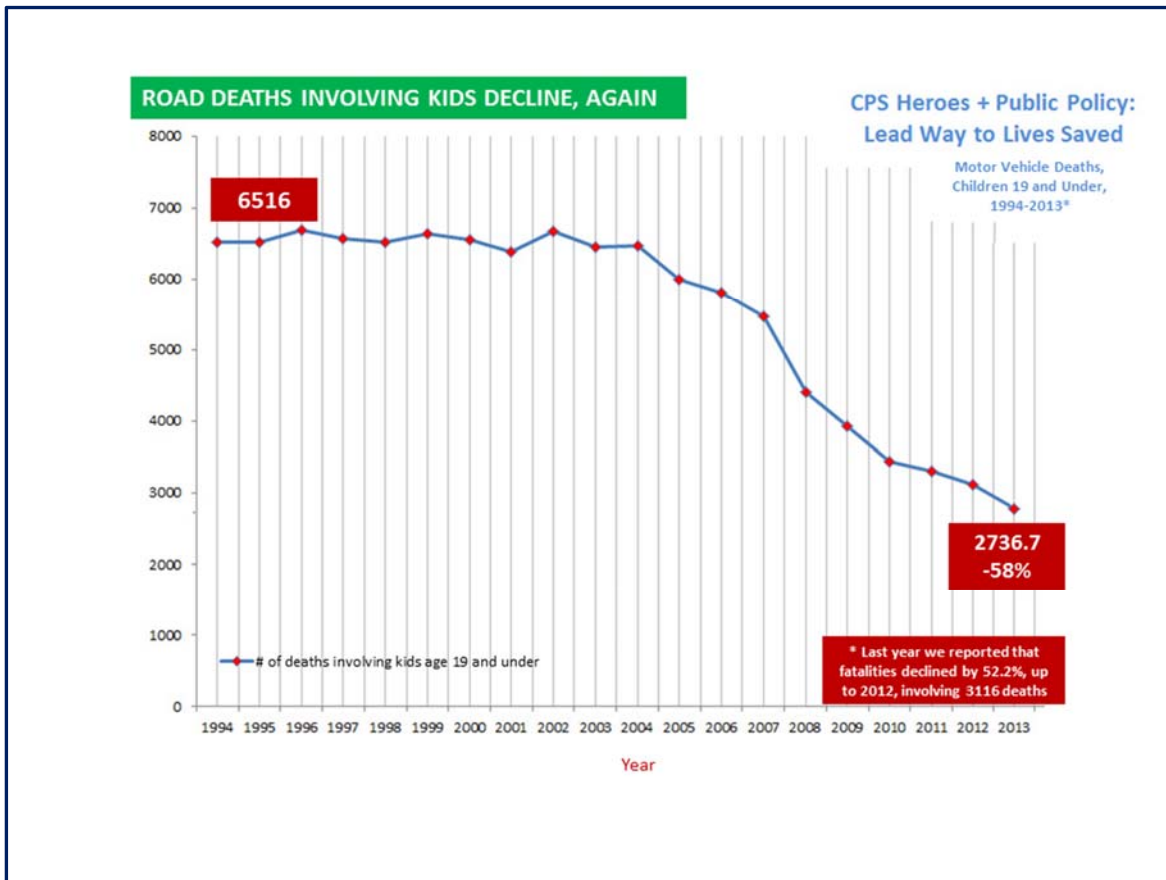
We applaud the Committee for its work in passing MAP-21, the commitment of both bodies and for the bipartisan nature in which the bill was approached. When the history of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress is written, MAP-21 might be considered the most consequential law that it passed. The law took a number of important steps that will make children under 19 safer in cars and on roads and highways. We also are thankful that you are committed to a long-term law, and feel that one of the flaws in MAP-21 was its limited time period. We are joined in this letter by 84 Safe Kids coalitions, representing at least 52% of U.S. licensed drivers.<sup>1</sup> The following will provide you with our priorities for the successor to MAP-21, all important to making kids safer in and around motor vehicles and roads.

In this letter, we focus on the following key areas:

- **Teen Driving**, modifying the MAP-21 GDL grant program to increase its effectiveness in incentivizing states to pass strong licensing laws involving teens.
- **Child Passenger Safety**, prioritizing high-visibility enforcement (HVE) and awareness of car seat, as well as seat belt usage. The law should continue to require states to provide access to certified technician assistance provided at dedicated inspection stations, keeping child occupant protection a priority of state traffic safety offices.
- **Pedestrian & Bike Safety**, fostering “Vision Zero,” “Toward Zero Deaths” and “Complete Streets” strategies to make kids safer on foot and when cycling.
- **Distraction**, updating the law to identify distraction in all its forms as a risk to children both in and around vehicles.
- **Heat Stroke**, encouraging NHTSA to continue the momentum and emphasize the dangers to unattended children in vehicles, resulting in this most tragic loss of young life.

**Safe Kids Worldwide:** We were founded in 1988 by Dr. Martin Eichelberger, a pediatric surgeon from Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, DC who saw all too many injuries—preventable injuries—in the pediatric emergency room. Built as an evidence-based organization, Safe Kids was formed with a singular mission: to dramatically decrease the rate of preventable injuries, the leading killer of kids under 19 both then and now. Safe Kids has been part of the effort that has resulted in a 60.2% decrease in the preventable injury death rate.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, incidents involving motor vehicles cause the greatest number

of deaths and injuries, though significant progress has been made. The number of children dying in car crashes has declined by 58% from 1987 to 2013.<sup>3</sup> This translates into 6,516 kids dying in 1994 and 2,736 in 2013. However, it remains the number one killer of kids ages 1 to 19.<sup>4</sup>



We believe this data is strong evidence that the indispensable work that you do in setting the national policy for road safety has a compelling impact on making all of us safer, especially the most vulnerable, our kids. We know that the role of laws, regulation and policy innovation is a game changer when it comes to child safety, especially involving motor vehicle crashes. The impact of the requirements involving the use of seat belts and child restraint systems are just two examples of tremendous success.

We believe the relatively new set of interventions in MAP-21 will have significant impact. Here, we will address aspects of the law in which we see room for improvement in the next authorization bill and several other areas that the successor to MAP-21 can address. Some of the innovations embrace technology and others are driven by common sense like enforcing neighborhood appropriate speed limits where kids play and around their schools.

**Child Restraint Systems: Consistent Use, Correct Usage and Availability:** When installed and used correctly, there is no question that child safety seats and safety belts prevent injuries and save lives. Child safety seats can reduce fatal injury by up to 71% for infants and 54% for toddlers (ages 1 to 4).<sup>5</sup> Recently, the CDC published a report on child restraint use, mortality and morbidity.<sup>6</sup> The CDC looked at NHTSA statistics to conclude that 3,308 lives of kids aged 0-4 were saved because they were in car seats.<sup>6</sup> While many families use restraints for their children, there are still far too many children riding unrestrained.

Safe Kids believes that a child must be restrained in a car seat based on their age, height, weight and developmental stage for every ride, every time. In 2013, Safe Kids conducted a survey of 1,000 parents and determined that car seat use is not at all universal for every ride, every time. Because many parents were acknowledging their own lapses, we believe that the answers were candid ones. For example, 1 in 3 high-income parents told us that it is acceptable to leave a child unrestrained for a short ride, even though 60% of crashes involving children occur 10 minutes or less from home.<sup>7</sup> Younger parents compared to older parents said that it is acceptable to ride with children unrestrained when traveling overnight. Moreover, another study reported that the overall critical misuse for child restraints is about 73%.<sup>8</sup>

The CDC report concluded that while motor vehicle deaths declined significantly between 2002 and 2011, one-third of the children who died in 2011 were not restrained.<sup>9</sup> In addition, African-American children had significantly higher death rates from motor vehicle crashes, 2.0 versus 1.0 deaths per 100,000 population, and greater proportions of African-American children (45%) and Hispanic children (46%) died unrestrained, compared to white children (26%).<sup>10</sup>

Based on the foregoing, Safe Kids sees a need for states to renew a commitment to awareness and enforcement on child passenger safety. Our 2013 study suggests that public recognition of the safety value in keeping kids in child safety seats and buckled up must be repeated on a regular basis. New parents, grandparents and caregivers may not know the full benefit of child restraints for children up to the time when the adult seat belt fits them properly.

MAP-21, and the law before it, embrace awareness and enforcement campaigns to encourage the use of seat belts, as does Safe Kids. Knowing that these efforts have proven records of success, we support concentrated awareness and enforcement efforts relating to the every ride, every time use of car seats and booster seats. Funds in the occupant protection safety grant program can and should be used for this purpose, and states should be encouraged to do so. In its recent report, "Toward Zero Deaths," the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials endorsed the use of high visibility enforcement campaigns for child seat use as it is being employed for seat belt use.<sup>11</sup> All campaigns related to buckling up--seat belts and child restraint systems--should be designed to have a sustained effect over time and evaluated for performance.

**Providing Car and Booster Seats:** A critical part of our work has been encouraging the correct use of car seats by helping parents select the appropriate seats and install them correctly. Safe Kids is the certifying body for the 37,000 currently certified child passenger safety technicians. Safe Kids alone conducts car seat checks and collects data on those inspections using a standardized, scannable checklist for 80,000-100,000 car seats each year. Other inspection stations and organizations also help families with their car seats. But the number of seats checked reflects a small number of children actually riding in car seats from birth up to age 8 and older. We need to find more resources to serve diverse populations who are over-represented in crashes and are unrestrained. The 73% critical misuse cited above is strong evidence of this need.<sup>8</sup>

MAP-21 and prior versions of the law allow for the use of funds under Section 405(b) for the provision of car and booster seats for families who cannot afford them. However, there is little incentive for states to engage in this effort. We urge the Committee to consider ways to encourage state highway safety offices to 1) determine the extent of whether parents are foregoing the need to use car seats for economic reasons, and 2) develop strategies on how the need can be met, including the use of 405(b) funds for this purpose. Based on Fatal Analysis Reporting System (FARS) and the CDC data, special attention should be paid to African-American and Hispanic populations. Safe Kids coalitions have distributed more than 600,000 car

seats to low income families in the past 16 years. NHTSA's National Study on the Use of Booster Seats confirmed in 2011 (NSUBS) that 98% of infants ride in a car seat. Every year after that moment, usage wanes.<sup>12</sup> Because the proven safety benefits of car seats are so clear, it should be basic highway public policy that every child has access to an appropriate safety device for use in motor vehicles.

**Rear Facing Positioning and Rear Seating:** Several states have been considering a heightened child passenger safety law which would embrace a recommendation of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) that children be placed in a rear facing position until age two or the highest height and weight specified for a particular car seat. Safe Kids applauds this heightened approach for the smallest kids. We recognize that this creates challenges for state lawmakers in fully embracing the AAP standard for age, height and also issues of enforcement because the parents' decision could change depending on the specifications of their car seat. The Committee may consider report language which would encourage NHTSA and state highway safety offices to include this safety measure in its awareness campaigns.

A more user-friendly modification urged by AAP involves the recommended requirement that a child be seated in a rear vehicle seat up to the age of 13. We support incentivizing states to make this change by law.

**Seat Belt Usage:** Buckling up is important for all of us but especially for kids. The average for seat belt usage in the United States is 87 percent. The seat belt laws in 16 states are enforceable only if police stop a car for another offense. New Hampshire has no seat belt law, and only 73% percent there buckle up.<sup>13</sup> States without primary laws and below 80 percent for seat belt usage in 2013 include Arkansas, Massachusetts, Montana, Nebraska, Virginia and South Dakota. The next authorization bill should strongly encourage those 17 states to join the majority. We should do all we can to make the challenges of police officers as sensible and effective as they can be.

**Teen Driving and Graduated Driver's License Laws:** On teen driving, there is progress to report. In April, the Centers for Disease Control reported that since 2004, there's been a 55% decline in driving deaths involving kids 16-19. In 2004, 5,724 teenagers died in motor vehicle crashes, while it was 2,568 in 2013.<sup>14</sup> During that time states were adopting the three-tiered system for new drivers to obtain their licenses, known as Graduated Driver's Licenses (GDL), but the laws differ in terms of their severity. Among the factors contributing to the decline, the CDC cited the GDL laws as well as safer cars and a slowed economy.

But there is data that tells a disturbing side of the story. Motor vehicle crashes are the number one killer of our teenagers. The fatal crash rate per mile driven for 16-19 year-olds is nearly 3 times the rate for drivers ages 20 and over.<sup>15</sup> They are operating motor vehicles using dangerous practices that violate the law, and the result is fatal collisions. While the overall number of teens killed in motor vehicle crashes has declined dramatically over the last decade, the proportion of teens killed that were not using seat belts has remained almost unchanged at approximately half of all fatalities.<sup>16</sup> Further, passengers ages 16-20 were more often unrestrained in fatal crashes (55% of fatalities among this group), compared to passengers ages 10-15 (50.8%) in 2012.<sup>17</sup>

The key criteria in the GDL laws are: At what age can a driver receive a learner's permit and license? When can a new teen driver drive at night? How many passengers can be in the car with a new driver? How much training must a new teen driver undergo? Has the candidate for full driving privileges violated motor vehicle laws? The most comprehensive GDL programs are associated with reductions of 38% to 40% in fatal and injury crashes among 16-year-old drivers.<sup>18</sup> The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety created a useful tool

that evaluates how many lives can be saved by instituting crucial GDL elements.<sup>19</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention created a similar tool, the Motor Vehicle Prioritizing Interventions and Cost Calculator for States (MV PICCS).<sup>20</sup>

Recognizing this, MAP-21 sought to raise the effectiveness of state GDL laws with an incentive grant program. To win such a grant, states must insure that their licensing laws meet a rigid set of criteria, and NHTSA took the position that it was bound to interpret the language in a stringent way. Thus far, no state has been able to qualify for a MAP-21 GDL grant.

Moreover, there is little movement in state legislatures to strengthen GDL laws. In fact, Iowa loosened its licensing restrictions in 2013.<sup>21</sup> Safe Kids supported an effort in the last session and more recently before the Ohio legislature to enact a stronger GDL law, but both times the efforts were thwarted and thus the incentive intent of the law has not been achieved--and, in any event, the changes would not have qualified Ohio for a grant. IIHS recently reported that at least 10 states could more than halve their fatal crashes among teens 15-17 by enacting GDL provisions. Ohio could reduce deaths of teens by 39%.<sup>22</sup>

Safe Kids believes that the Committee should consider how to make the grant program more effective, without sacrificing the key GDL principles. We favor ideas which would favor states which have made significant progress in enacting the most effective provisions, while not making all of them required. In addition, the law should give NHTSA greater flexibility to grant waivers to states which have been conscientious in passing and enforcing their GDL laws, with the data to support the waiver application and to reward other ways that states have shown initiative. We believe a balance can be struck.

**Safe Routes to School/Ped and Bike Safety:** Pedestrian fatalities and injuries occur as a result of safety infrastructure and road design weaknesses. Many in the child safety education field were disappointed that MAP-21 combined the Safe Routes to School program into the Transportation Alternatives program with two other initiatives, and with less funds. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is an important program with proven results. In New York City, a study found that the rate of child pedestrian injuries during school hours fell by almost 44% following the introduction of infrastructure improvements to reduce speed and make pedestrians routes more sensible.<sup>23</sup> The California Department of Transportation estimated that the safety benefit of SRTS was up to a 49% decrease in childhood bicycle and pedestrian collision rates, while, at the same time, walking and biking has increased in the range of 20 to 200 percent.<sup>24</sup> A multi-state study involving Safe Routes programs in Florida and Oregon found that walking and bicycling increased by 43% over a five-year period.<sup>25</sup> Thus, SRTS investments are a win-win, encouraging fitness and improving safety.

Specifically, we hope the Committee will increase the Transportation Alternatives Program funding level. Additionally, we appreciate that requiring a 20% local/state match in funding will help the federal funds go farther. However, this seriously disadvantages small towns and budget-strapped cities which probably have significant needs for school safety improvements. We urge more flexibility so that states have the authority to grant waivers.

We deeply appreciate the effort of Secretary Foxx to focus attention on all challenges facing pedestrians and bicyclists, and those seeking to arrive at smart policies to make all modes of transportation safe at a time when resources are scarce. His challenge to mayors of cities large and small, in rural areas and highly urbanized ones is important. In addition, Safe Kids also embraces the policies and values of both the "complete streets" movement and "Vision Zero." Some of those values include the following, and we urge the Committee to take note of them as it makes policy in the successor to MAP-21 and moving forward:

- "Walkability audits" are an important tool for beginning to plan transportation projects. They can be effective in winning local support.
- "Traffic Calming" is policy speak for "slow down." Data in other cities abroad demonstrate that slowing down traffic whether it's through engineering or speed limit laws is successful at saving lives. That is especially true for kids on foot and bicycles.
- Common sense design changes are effective and do not need to be costly. A speed bump costs roughly \$4,500-\$7,500 to install and maintain.<sup>26</sup> Changes that can be made in the timing of traffic lights to give pedestrians a head start to cross involves a nominal cost. On the high end of both cost and effectiveness, a pedestrian "refuge" island can cost around \$30,000 or more.
- Speed cameras are controversial, but have proven to be effective in saving lives. We support their use around schools and other places where kids and other vulnerable populations are walking.

A significant change that is among the tools in Vision Zero and other approaches is lowering the inner city speed limit. This works. A study by the Transportation Research Board observed nine crosswalks in Boston: Drivers were four times more likely to yield when traveling at 20mph rather than 40mph.<sup>27</sup>

The techniques and values of Vision Zero are embraced in a bipartisan bill introduced by Congressmen Vern Buchanan (R-FL) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), HR 1274. One of the bills most important features is a requirement that at least 25% of the awards go to similar communities.<sup>28</sup>

**Heatstroke:** Within 10 minutes, the inside temperature of a vehicle can increase up to 20 degrees hotter than the outside temperature.<sup>29</sup> At least 636 children have died in vehicles from heatstroke since 1998. In 2014, 30 children died in this way. This represented a welcome decrease from the past year which saw 44 deaths.<sup>30</sup> We believe that heightened awareness about the risk was a factor in the decrease, and that awareness came principally in two ways: 1) the public/private partnership on public awareness and also 2) a prominent criminal case which occurred in Georgia in which a father was charged with felony murder after leaving his 22-month old son in a mini-SUV on a day that reached 92 degrees at noon. The case received national coverage.<sup>31</sup> Safe Kids is committed to a strong effort to build on this momentum and applauds the work of NHTSA in helping to lead the effort. In April, the Auto Alliance released a report based on a survey of parents and caregivers which demonstrated that the public is much more aware of the heatstroke risk and specific aspects of the problem. Importantly, the increased knowledge contributed to a majority saying they would be less likely to leave their child alone in a vehicle, and nearly eight of ten reported they would take action--such as calling 911--if they see another child alone in a car.<sup>32</sup> Its work on heatstroke should be embraced in the authorization law in the strongest language possible.

**Distraction: On Foot and Behind the Wheel:** Considerable attention has been paid to the use of electronic equipment on the part of drivers, especially those texting. For teenage drivers, the elements of GDL laws pertaining to cell phone use and texting are important. Drivers climbing the GDL slope are not as skilled. In 2011, 11 percent of teen drivers 15 to 19 who were killed in motor vehicle crashes were distracted when the crash occurred; 21 percent of those were distracted by cellphones.<sup>33</sup> We urge state lawmakers to include tough distraction laws in GDL strategies.

Advances in technology have improved our lives and, in many ways, have enhanced safety. However, distraction from some forms of technology are also a factor putting everyone who shares the roads at risk, including young pedestrians. Twenty-four Safe Kids coalitions conducted an observational survey of middle and high school students crossing a street in a school zone, resulting in a remarkable 34,325 observations. One in five high school students were observed crossing the street wearing headphones, texting or talking

on the phone, and middle school students were similarly observed at a rate of one in eight. The reported pedestrian behavior is a danger and we must work to make roads and intersections near schools safer, and we can.

We are optimistic that technology can be used to make roads and motor vehicles safer. With regard to teen drivers,<sup>34</sup> we were happy to see the development of features in a General Motors motor vehicle designed to make teen drivers more careful. Research and development like this should be encouraged.

**Impaired Driving:** Safe Kids is strongly supportive of the efforts of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) in pressing for strong measures to reduce impaired driving including a greater use of ignition interlock brakes and the Driver Alcohol Detection System for Safety (DADSS) technology. Safe Kids appreciates the work of the Committee in embracing the impaired driving incentive grant with the dollars it deserves to be effective.

Additionally, NHTSA data from 2011 shows that 26% of drivers ages 15-20 who were killed in motor crashes had a blood alcohol concentration of .08% or higher.<sup>35</sup> Thus, GDL laws should be especially tough when novice and intermediate drivers violate state drunk driving laws.

NHTSA is to be commended for beginning to research the implications of people driving under the influence of marijuana that is legal, more available and in many cases stronger.<sup>36</sup> We hear from our coalitions in Washington State and Oregon about the adverse consequences of legalized marijuana without a careful study of unintended consequences. Safe Kids takes no position on the issue of legalized marijuana, including for medicinal purposes.

**Other Issues:** Safe Kids strongly favors mandatory helmet laws for motorcycle drivers and their passengers. Safe Kids has been involved in several states in which efforts were made to repeal those laws. It is important for policy making to match the speed of innovation and that the DOT and NHTSA have “radar” to detect when a new technology can distract drivers and/or pedestrians.

Safe Kids agrees with the Chairmen and others in the transportation policy community that a longer term authorization bill should pass the Congress. This will give the states the time and focus they need to effectively implement programs and give the Committee more time to thoroughly evaluate programs based on hard evidence.

**Conclusion:** Safe Kids appreciates this opportunity to be heard on issues vital to keeping our kids safe on the road and in motor vehicles. Please don’t hesitate to contact us if there’s any way we can provide you with further information and support for your priorities.

Sincerely,







## Local Coalitions

Safe Kids Middlesex County  
Safe Kids Thurston County  
Safe Kids Upstate  
Safe Kids Greater Toledo  
Safe Kids Montgomery County  
Safe Kids Pima County  
Safe Kids Greater Houston  
Safe Kids Denver  
Safe Kids Northwest Metro Minneapolis  
Safe Kids Anoka County  
Safe Kids Allegheny County  
Safe Kids Eastern Carolina  
Safe Kids Johnston County  
Safe Kids Northwest Piedmont  
Safe Kids Wayne County  
Safe Kids Mid-Carolinas Region  
Safe Kids Portage County  
Safe Kids Prince George's County  
Safe Kids Fargo-Moorhead  
Safe Kids Grand Forks  
Safe Kids Southeastern Pennsylvania  
Safe Kids Wood County  
Safe Kids Washington County  
Safe Kids Tulsa  
Safe Kids Colorado Springs  
Safe Kids Macon County  
Safe Kids Monterey County  
Safe Kids Benton-Franklin  
Safe Kids Amador Partners  
Safe Kids Fairbanks  
Safe Kids Guilford County  
Safe Kids Kittitas County  
Safe Kids Vanderburgh/Warrick Counties  
Safe Kids Marinette County  
Safe Kids Northwest Missouri  
Safe Kids Portland Metro  
Safe Kids Greater Augusta  
Safe Kids Union County  
Safe Kids Toombs County  
Safe Kids Charlotte-Mecklenburg  
Safe Kids Fairfield County  
Safe Kids Bucks County  
Safe Kids Greater Tampa  
Safe Kids Sarpy Cass  
Safe Kids Anderson County

Safe Kids Kalamazoo County  
Safe Kids Harrison County  
Safe Kids Champagne County  
Safe Kids Boston  
Safe Kids Northeast Minnesota  
Safe Kids Macon County  
Safe Kids Vanderburgh/Warrick  
Safe Kids Kenai Peninsula  
Safe Kids Madison  
Safe Kids Mat-Su  
Safe Kids Fayette  
Safe Kids Kentucky  
Safe Kids El Paso  
Safe Kids Stanislaus County  
Safe Kids West Los Angeles

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May 5, 2015

Honorable John Thune  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Science & Transportation  
142 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Bill Nelson  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Science & Transportation  
142 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson:

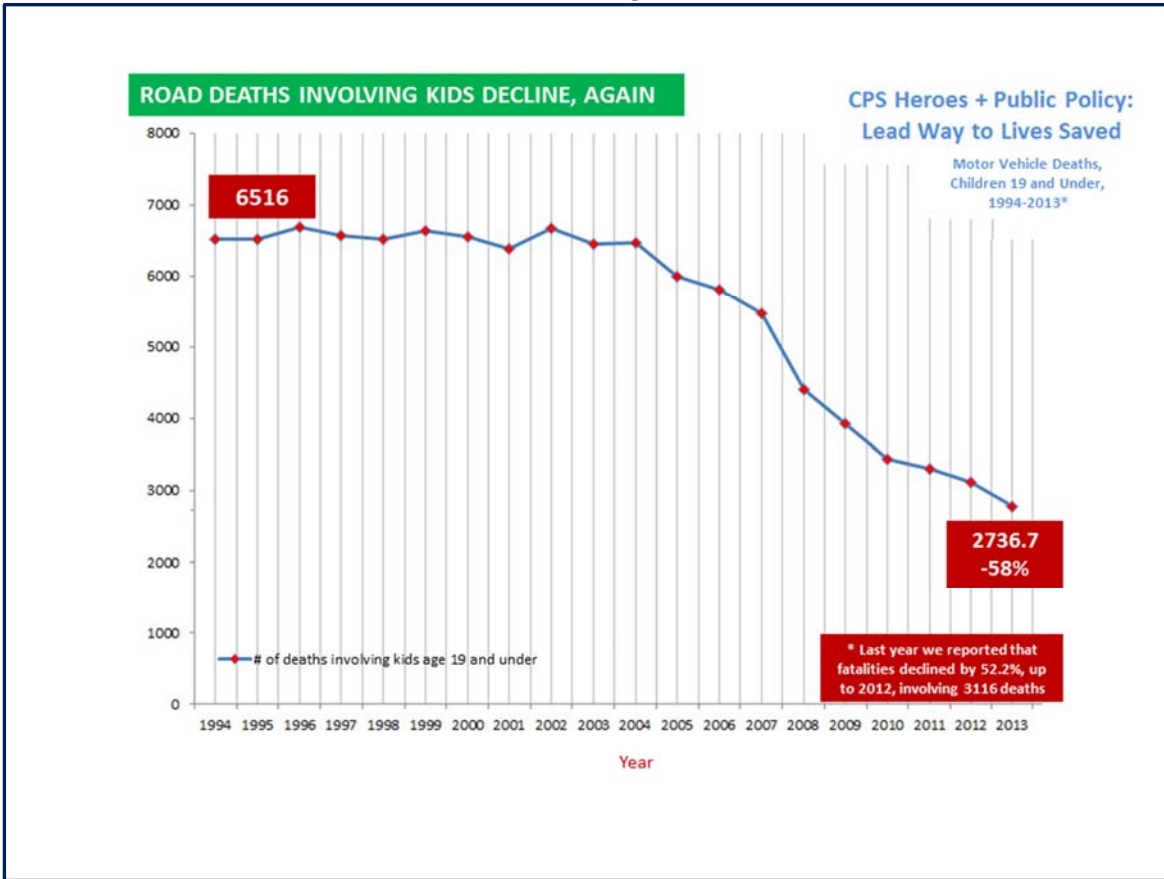
We applaud the Committee for its work in passing MAP-21, the commitment of both bodies and for the bipartisan nature in which the bill was approached. When the history of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress is written, MAP-21 might be considered the most consequential law that it passed. The law took a number of important steps that will make children under 19 safer in cars and on roads and highways. We also are thankful that you are committed to a long-term law, and feel that one of the flaws in MAP-21 was its limited time period. We are joined in this letter by 84 Safe Kids coalitions, representing at least 52% of U.S. licensed drivers.<sup>1</sup> The following will provide you with our priorities for the successor to MAP-21, all important to making kids safer in and around motor vehicles and roads.

In this letter, we focus on the following key areas:

- **Teen Driving**, modifying the MAP-21 GDL grant program to increase its effectiveness in incentivizing states to pass strong licensing laws involving teens.
- **Child Passenger Safety**, prioritizing high-visibility enforcement (HVE) and awareness of car seat, as well as seat belt usage. The law should continue to require states to provide access to certified technician assistance provided at dedicated inspection stations, keeping child occupant protection a priority of state traffic safety offices.
- **Pedestrian & Bike Safety**, fostering “Vision Zero,” “Toward Zero Deaths” and “Complete Streets” strategies to make kids safer on foot and when cycling.
- **Distraction**, updating the law to identify distraction in all its forms as a risk to children both in and around vehicles.
- **Heat Stroke**, encouraging NHTSA to continue the momentum and emphasize the dangers to unattended children in vehicles, resulting in this most tragic loss of young life.

**Safe Kids Worldwide:** We were founded in 1988 by Dr. Martin Eichelberger, a pediatric surgeon from Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, DC who saw all too many injuries—preventable injuries—in the pediatric emergency room. Built as an evidence-based organization, Safe Kids was formed with a singular mission: to dramatically decrease the rate of preventable injuries, the leading killer of kids under 19 both then and now. Safe Kids has been part of the effort that has resulted in a 60.2% decrease in the preventable injury death rate.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, incidents involving motor vehicles cause the greatest number

of deaths and injuries, though significant progress has been made. The number of children dying in car crashes has declined by 58% from 1987 to 2013.<sup>3</sup> This translates into 6,516 kids dying in 1994 and 2,736 in 2013. However, it remains the number one killer of kids ages 1 to 19.<sup>4</sup>



We believe this data is strong evidence that the indispensable work that you do in setting the national policy for road safety has a compelling impact on making all of us safer, especially the most vulnerable, our kids. We know that the role of laws, regulation and policy innovation is a game changer when it comes to child safety, especially involving motor vehicle crashes. The impact of the requirements involving the use of seat belts and child restraint systems are just two examples of tremendous success.

We believe the relatively new set of interventions in MAP-21 will have significant impact. Here, we will address aspects of the law in which we see room for improvement in the next authorization bill and several other areas that the successor to MAP-21 can address. Some of the innovations embrace technology and others are driven by common sense like enforcing neighborhood appropriate speed limits where kids play and around their schools.

**Child Restraint Systems: Consistent Use, Correct Usage and Availability:** When installed and used correctly, there is no question that child safety seats and safety belts prevent injuries and save lives. Child safety seats can reduce fatal injury by up to 71% for infants and 54% for toddlers (ages 1 to 4).<sup>5</sup> Recently, the CDC published a report on child restraint use, mortality and morbidity.<sup>6</sup> The CDC looked at NHTSA statistics to conclude that 3,308 lives of kids aged 0-4 were saved because they were in car seats.<sup>6</sup> While many families use restraints for their children, there are still far too many children riding unrestrained.

Safe Kids believes that a child must be restrained in a car seat based on their age, height, weight and developmental stage for every ride, every time. In 2013, Safe Kids conducted a survey of 1,000 parents and determined that car seat use is not at all universal for every ride, every time. Because many parents were acknowledging their own lapses, we believe that the answers were candid ones. For example, 1 in 3 high-income parents told us that it is acceptable to leave a child unrestrained for a short ride, even though 60% of crashes involving children occur 10 minutes or less from home.<sup>7</sup> Younger parents compared to older parents said that it is acceptable to ride with children unrestrained when traveling overnight. Moreover, another study reported that the overall critical misuse for child restraints is about 73%.<sup>8</sup>

The CDC report concluded that while motor vehicle deaths declined significantly between 2002 and 2011, one-third of the children who died in 2011 were not restrained.<sup>9</sup> In addition, African-American children had significantly higher death rates from motor vehicle crashes, 2.0 versus 1.0 deaths per 100,000 population, and greater proportions of African-American children (45%) and Hispanic children (46%) died unrestrained, compared to white children (26%).<sup>10</sup>

Based on the foregoing, Safe Kids sees a need for states to renew a commitment to awareness and enforcement on child passenger safety. Our 2013 study suggests that public recognition of the safety value in keeping kids in child safety seats and buckled up must be repeated on a regular basis. New parents, grandparents and caregivers may not know the full benefit of child restraints for children up to the time when the adult seat belt fits them properly.

MAP-21, and the law before it, embrace awareness and enforcement campaigns to encourage the use of seat belts, as does Safe Kids. Knowing that these efforts have proven records of success, we support concentrated awareness and enforcement efforts relating to the every ride, every time use of car seats and booster seats. Funds in the occupant protection safety grant program can and should be used for this purpose, and states should be encouraged to do so. In its recent report, "Toward Zero Deaths," the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials endorsed the use of high visibility enforcement campaigns for child seat use as it is being employed for seat belt use.<sup>11</sup> All campaigns related to buckling up--seat belts and child restraint systems--should be designed to have a sustained effect over time and evaluated for performance.

**Providing Car and Booster Seats:** A critical part of our work has been encouraging the correct use of car seats by helping parents select the appropriate seats and install them correctly. Safe Kids is the certifying body for the 37,000 currently certified child passenger safety technicians. Safe Kids alone conducts car seat checks and collects data on those inspections using a standardized, scannable checklist for 80,000-100,000 car seats each year. Other inspection stations and organizations also help families with their car seats. But the number of seats checked reflects a small number of children actually riding in car seats from birth up to age 8 and older. We need to find more resources to serve diverse populations who are over-represented in crashes and are unrestrained. The 73% critical misuse cited above is strong evidence of this need.<sup>8</sup>

MAP-21 and prior versions of the law allow for the use of funds under Section 405(b) for the provision of car and booster seats for families who cannot afford them. However, there is little incentive for states to engage in this effort. We urge the Committee to consider ways to encourage state highway safety offices to 1) determine the extent of whether parents are foregoing the need to use car seats for economic reasons, and 2) develop strategies on how the need can be met, including the use of 405(b) funds for this purpose. Based on Fatal Analysis Reporting System (FARS) and the CDC data, special attention should be paid to African-American and Hispanic populations. Safe Kids coalitions have distributed more than 600,000 car seats to low income families in the past 16 years. NHTSA's National Study on the Use of Booster Seats

confirmed in 2011 (NSUBS) that 98% of infants ride in a car seat. Every year after that moment, usage wanes.<sup>12</sup> Because the proven safety benefits of car seats are so clear, it should be basic highway public policy that every child has access to an appropriate safety device for use in motor vehicles.

**Rear Facing Positioning and Rear Seating:** Several states have been considering a heightened child passenger safety law which would embrace a recommendation of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) that children be placed in a rear facing position until age two or the highest height and weight specified for a particular car seat. Safe Kids applauds this heightened approach for the smallest kids. We recognize that this creates challenges for state lawmakers in fully embracing the AAP standard for age, height and also issues of enforcement because the parents' decision could change depending on the specifications of their car seat. The Committee may consider report language which would encourage NHTSA and state highway safety offices to include this safety measure in its awareness campaigns.

A more user-friendly modification urged by AAP involves the recommended requirement that a child be seated in a rear vehicle seat up to the age of 13. We support incentivizing states to make this change by law.

**Seat Belt Usage:** Buckling up is important for all of us but especially for kids. The average for seat belt usage in the United States is 87 percent. The seat belt laws in 16 states are enforceable only if police stop a car for another offense. New Hampshire has no seat belt law, and only 73% percent there buckle up.<sup>13</sup> States without primary laws and below 80 percent for seat belt usage in 2013 include Arkansas, Massachusetts, Montana, Nebraska, Virginia and South Dakota. The next authorization bill should strongly encourage those 17 states to join the majority. We should do all we can to make the challenges of police officers as sensible and effective as they can be.

**Teen Driving and Graduated Driver's License Laws:** On teen driving, there is progress to report. In April, the Centers for Disease Control reported that since 2004, there's been a 55% decline in driving deaths involving kids 16-19. In 2004, 5,724 teenagers died in motor vehicle crashes, while it was 2,568 in 2013.<sup>14</sup> During that time states were adopting the three-tiered system for new drivers to obtain their licenses, known as Graduated Driver's Licenses (GDL), but the laws differ in terms of their severity. Among the factors contributing to the decline, the CDC cited the GDL laws as well as safer cars and a slowed economy.

But there is data that tells a disturbing side of the story. Motor vehicle crashes are the number one killer of our teenagers. The fatal crash rate per mile driven for 16-19 year-olds is nearly 3 times the rate for drivers ages 20 and over.<sup>15</sup> They are operating motor vehicles using dangerous practices that violate the law, and the result is fatal collisions. While the overall number of teens killed in motor vehicle crashes has declined dramatically over the last decade, the proportion of teens killed that were not using seat belts has remained almost unchanged at approximately half of all fatalities.<sup>16</sup> Further, passengers ages 16-20 were more often unrestrained in fatal crashes (55% of fatalities among this group), compared to passengers ages 10-15 (50.8%) in 2012.<sup>17</sup>

The key criteria in the GDL laws are: At what age can a driver receive a learner's permit and license? When can a new teen driver drive at night? How many passengers can be in the car with a new driver? How much training must a new teen driver undergo? Has the candidate for full driving privileges violated motor vehicle laws? The most comprehensive GDL programs are associated with reductions of 38% to 40% in fatal and injury crashes among 16-year-old drivers.<sup>18</sup> The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety created a useful tool that evaluates how many lives can be saved by instituting crucial GDL elements.<sup>19</sup> The Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention created a similar tool, the Motor Vehicle Prioritizing Interventions and Cost Calculator for States (MV PICCS).<sup>20</sup>

Recognizing this, MAP-21 sought to raise the effectiveness of state GDL laws with an incentive grant program. To win such a grant, states must insure that their licensing laws meet a rigid set of criteria, and NHTSA took the position that it was bound to interpret the language in a stringent way. Thus far, no state has been able to qualify for a MAP-21 GDL grant.

Moreover, there is little movement in state legislatures to strengthen GDL laws. In fact, Iowa loosened its licensing restrictions in 2013.<sup>21</sup> Safe Kids supported an effort in the last session and more recently before the Ohio legislature to enact a stronger GDL law, but both times the efforts were thwarted and thus the incentive intent of the law has not been achieved--and, in any event, the changes would not have qualified Ohio for a grant. IIHS recently reported that at least 10 states could more than halve their fatal crashes among teens 15-17 by enacting GDL provisions. Ohio could reduce deaths of teens by 39%.<sup>22</sup>

Safe Kids believes that the Committee should consider how to make the grant program more effective, without sacrificing the key GDL principles. We favor ideas which would favor states which have made significant progress in enacting the most effective provisions, while not making all of them required. In addition, the law should give NHTSA greater flexibility to grant waivers to states which have been conscientious in passing and enforcing their GDL laws, with the data to support the waiver application and to reward other ways that states have shown initiative. We believe a balance can be struck.

**Safe Routes to School/Ped and Bike Safety:** Pedestrian fatalities and injuries occur as a result of safety infrastructure and road design weaknesses. Many in the child safety education field were disappointed that MAP-21 combined the Safe Routes to School program into the Transportation Alternatives program with two other initiatives, and with less funds. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is an important program with proven results. In New York City, a study found that the rate of child pedestrian injuries during school hours fell by almost 44% following the introduction of infrastructure improvements to reduce speed and make pedestrians routes more sensible.<sup>23</sup> The California Department of Transportation estimated that the safety benefit of SRTS was up to a 49% decrease in childhood bicycle and pedestrian collision rates, while, at the same time, walking and biking has increased in the range of 20 to 200 percent.<sup>24</sup> A multi-state study involving Safe Routes programs in Florida and Oregon found that walking and bicycling increased by 43% over a five-year period.<sup>25</sup> Thus, SRTS investments are a win-win, encouraging fitness and improving safety.

Specifically, we hope the Committee will increase the Transportation Alternatives Program funding level. Additionally, we appreciate that requiring a 20% local/state match in funding will help the federal funds go farther. However, this seriously disadvantages small towns and budget-strapped cities which probably have significant needs for school safety improvements. We urge more flexibility so that states have the authority to grant waivers.

We deeply appreciate the effort of Secretary Foxx to focus attention on all challenges facing pedestrians and bicyclists, and those seeking to arrive at smart policies to make all modes of transportation safe at a time when resources are scarce. His challenge to mayors of cities large and small, in rural areas and highly urbanized ones is important. In addition, Safe Kids also embraces the policies and values of both the "complete streets" movement and "Vision Zero." Some of those values include the following, and we urge the Committee to take note of them as it makes policy in the successor to MAP-21 and moving forward:



- "Walkability audits" are an important tool for beginning to plan transportation projects. They can be effective in winning local support.
- "Traffic Calming" is policy speak for "slow down." Data in other cities abroad demonstrate that slowing down traffic whether it's through engineering or speed limit laws is successful at saving lives. That is especially true for kids on foot and bicycles.
- Common sense design changes are effective and do not need to be costly. A speed bump costs roughly \$4,500-\$7,500 to install and maintain.<sup>26</sup> Changes that can be made in the timing of traffic lights to give pedestrians a head start to cross involves a nominal cost. On the high end of both cost and effectiveness, a pedestrian "refuge" island can cost around \$30,000 or more.
- Speed cameras are controversial, but have proven to be effective in saving lives. We support their use around schools and other places where kids and other vulnerable populations are walking.

A significant change that is among the tools in Vision Zero and other approaches is lowering the inner city speed limit. This works. A study by the Transportation Research Board observed nine crosswalks in Boston: Drivers were four times more likely to yield when traveling at 20mph rather than 40mph.<sup>27</sup>

The techniques and values of Vision Zero are embraced in a bipartisan bill introduced by Congressmen Vern Buchanan (R-FL) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), HR 1274. One of the bills most important features is a requirement that at least 25% of the awards go to similar communities.<sup>28</sup>

**Heatstroke:** Within 10 minutes, the inside temperature of a vehicle can increase up to 20 degrees hotter than the outside temperature.<sup>29</sup> At least 636 children have died in vehicles from heatstroke since 1998. In 2014, 30 children died in this way. This represented a welcome decrease from the past year which saw 44 deaths.<sup>30</sup> We believe that heightened awareness about the risk was a factor in the decrease, and that awareness came principally in two ways: 1) the public/private partnership on public awareness and also 2) a prominent criminal case which occurred in Georgia in which a father was charged with felony murder after leaving his 22-month old son in a mini-SUV on a day that reached 92 degrees at noon. The case received national coverage.<sup>31</sup> Safe Kids is committed to a strong effort to build on this momentum and applauds the work of NHTSA in helping to lead the effort. In April, the Auto Alliance released a report based on a survey of parents and caregivers which demonstrated that the public is much more aware of the heatstroke risk and specific aspects of the problem. Importantly, the increased knowledge contributed to a majority saying they would be less likely to leave their child alone in a vehicle, and nearly eight of ten reported they would take action--such as calling 911--if they see another child alone in a car.<sup>32</sup> Its work on heatstroke should be embraced in the authorization law in the strongest language possible.

**Distraction: On Foot and Behind the Wheel:** Considerable attention has been paid to the use of electronic equipment on the part of drivers, especially those texting. For teenage drivers, the elements of GDL laws pertaining to cell phone use and texting are important. Drivers climbing the GDL slope are not as skilled. In 2011, 11 percent of teen drivers 15 to 19 who were killed in motor vehicle crashes were distracted when the crash occurred; 21 percent of those were distracted by cellphones.<sup>33</sup> We urge state lawmakers to include tough distraction laws in GDL strategies.

Advances in technology have improved our lives and, in many ways, have enhanced safety. However, distraction from some forms of technology are also a factor putting everyone who shares the roads at risk, including young pedestrians. Twenty-four Safe Kids coalitions conducted an observational survey of middle and high school students crossing a street in a school zone, resulting in a remarkable 34,325 observations. One in five high school students were observed crossing the street wearing headphones, texting or talking

on the phone, and middle school students were similarly observed at a rate of one in eight. The reported pedestrian behavior is a danger and we must work to make roads and intersections near schools safer, and we can.

We are optimistic that technology can be used to make roads and motor vehicles safer. With regard to teen drivers,<sup>34</sup> we were happy to see the development of features in a General Motors motor vehicle designed to make teen drivers more careful. Research and development like this should be encouraged.

**Impaired Driving:** Safe Kids is strongly supportive of the efforts of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) in pressing for strong measures to reduce impaired driving including a greater use of ignition interlock brakes and the Driver Alcohol Detection System for Safety (DADSS) technology. Safe Kids appreciates the work of the Committee in embracing the impaired driving incentive grant with the dollars it deserves to be effective.

Additionally, NHTSA data from 2011 shows that 26% of drivers ages 15-20 who were killed in motor crashes had a blood alcohol concentration of .08% or higher.<sup>35</sup> Thus, GDL laws should be especially tough when novice and intermediate drivers violate state drunk driving laws.

NHTSA is to be commended for beginning to research the implications of people driving under the influence of marijuana that is legal, more available and in many cases stronger.<sup>36</sup> We hear from our coalitions in Washington State and Oregon about the adverse consequences of legalized marijuana without a careful study of unintended consequences. Safe Kids takes no position on the issue of legalized marijuana, including for medicinal purposes.

**Other Issues:** Safe Kids strongly favors mandatory helmet laws for motorcycle drivers and their passengers. Safe Kids has been involved in several states in which efforts were made to repeal those laws. It is important for policy making to match the speed of innovation and that the DOT and NHTSA have “radar” to detect when a new technology can distract drivers and/or pedestrians.

Safe Kids agrees with the Chairmen and others in the transportation policy community that a longer term authorization bill should pass the Congress. This will give the states the time and focus they need to effectively implement programs and give the Committee more time to thoroughly evaluate programs based on hard evidence.

**Conclusion:** Safe Kids appreciates this opportunity to be heard on issues vital to keeping our kids safe on the road and in motor vehicles. Please don’t hesitate to contact us if there’s any way we can provide you with further information and support for your priorities.

Sincerely,





## Local Coalitions

Safe Kids Middlesex County  
Safe Kids Thurston County  
Safe Kids Upstate  
Safe Kids Greater Toledo  
Safe Kids Montgomery County  
Safe Kids Pima County  
Safe Kids Greater Houston  
Safe Kids Denver  
Safe Kids Northwest Metro Minneapolis  
Safe Kids Anoka County  
Safe Kids Allegheny County  
Safe Kids Eastern Carolina  
Safe Kids Johnston County  
Safe Kids Northwest Piedmont  
Safe Kids Wayne County  
Safe Kids Mid-Carolinas Region  
Safe Kids Portage County  
Safe Kids Prince George's County  
Safe Kids Fargo-Moorhead  
Safe Kids Grand Forks  
Safe Kids Southeastern Pennsylvania  
Safe Kids Wood County  
Safe Kids Washington County  
Safe Kids Tulsa  
Safe Kids Colorado Springs  
Safe Kids Macon County  
Safe Kids Monterey County  
Safe Kids Benton-Franklin  
Safe Kids Amador Partners  
Safe Kids Fairbanks  
Safe Kids Guilford County  
Safe Kids Kittitas County  
Safe Kids Vanderburgh/Warrick Counties  
Safe Kids Marinette County  
Safe Kids Northwest Missouri  
Safe Kids Portland Metro  
Safe Kids Greater Augusta  
Safe Kids Union County  
Safe Kids Toombs County  
Safe Kids Charlotte-Mecklenburg  
Safe Kids Fairfield County  
Safe Kids Bucks County  
Safe Kids Greater Tampa  
Safe Kids Sarpy Cass  
Safe Kids Anderson County

Safe Kids Kalamazoo County  
Safe Kids Harrison County  
Safe Kids Champagne County  
Safe Kids Boston  
Safe Kids Northeast Minnesota  
Safe Kids Macon County  
Safe Kids Vanderburgh/Warrick  
Safe Kids Kenai Peninsula  
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Safe Kids El Paso  
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