



December 20, 2016

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
United States House of Representatives
104 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Cohen
United States House of Representatives
2404 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator-Elect Duckworth and Representative Cohen,

We thank you for introducing H.R. 6502, the Seat Belts Save Lives Act of 2016, which would direct the U.S. Department of Transportation to require new school buses to be equipped with three-point safety belts. Safe Kids Worldwide is a non-profit dedicated to reducing preventable injuries and deaths in children aged 0 up to 19. We are encouraged by your efforts to prioritize child safety and hope that Congress will work together to address this important issue.

A school bus remains the safest way for a child to get to school, but we are saddened by the tragedy in November 2016 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, which has encouraged the nation to think about school bus safety. In the Tennessee crash, six schoolchildren ages 6-10 died. The school bus was travelling at a high speed when it hit a mailbox on the right side of the road before swerving to the other side, hitting a utility pole and a tree.

The Chattanooga crash is still under investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), but a similar crash occurred in April 2014 in Anaheim, California, the only state in the U.S. which requires three-point seat belts. The driver lost consciousness and the bus went out of control traveling at 43 miles per hour. It hit a light pole and two trees. There were no fatalities. There was an NTSB simulation involving the two students in the "maximum crush" area, which showed that the kids would likely have been ejected and sustained serious if not fatal injuries had they not been buckled up.

While the two school bus crashes were similar—speeding buses having side impact into trees—the significant difference is that three-point seat belts were required and used in Anaheim and no lives were lost. In Chattanooga, there were no seat belts and six kids died. We believe seat belts save lives and strongly support the bill.

Safe Kids Joins with our allies in child safety, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, in supporting H.R. 6502. We also support the approach in Mr. Cohen's bill, H.R. 6461, providing grants because local school districts will need financial assistance to provide this important safety measure. We stand ready to support passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Carr".

Kate Carr,
President and CEO
Safe Kids Worldwide