



**Testimony of Deirdre Walsh,
Coordinator, Safe Kids Massachusetts and
Anthony Green
Public Policy Director, Safe Kids Worldwide
In Support of SB1960: An act relative to child passenger safety
April 12, 2017**

State Senator Thomas McGee, Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
State House Room 109C
Boston, MA 02133

State Representative William Straus, Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
State House Room 134
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairs McGee and Straus,

Thank you for considering SB1960, an act relative to child passenger safety, at this hearing today. We provide this statement on behalf of Safe Kids Worldwide and Safe Kids Massachusetts. We respectfully submit this testimony to comment on the importance of this bill to the safety of Massachusetts' children.

Safe Kids Worldwide is a nonprofit organization with the mission to prevent unintentional injuries involving kids 19 and under, through education, grassroots programs, and advocacy. Unintentional injury is the number one killer of Americans in that age group. Safe Kids Worldwide and our more than 400 coalitions nationwide work to reduce injuries related to drowning, falls, poisoning, and more. Safe Kids Massachusetts coalition is based out of the Boston Children's Hospital. Our 29-year history began with protecting kids in and around cars, whether they are in booster seats or walking more safely to school, and today remains a central aspect of our work. There has been a 60% decrease in the unintentional injury rate among children since Safe Kids was founded, and driving that reduction has been a 58% reduction in motor vehicle deaths. However, motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for children five years old to age 14 and there is a recent trend of sharply increasing motor vehicle deaths. In fact, from 2014 to 2015, there was an increase of 7.7% involving children eight and under.

Current Massachusetts state law provides a strong foundation for child vehicle safety, requiring that children under the age of eight be fastened and secured in a child passenger restraint and children under the age of 13 wear a safety belt. However, this requirement does not account for where in the vehicle children are seated and secured. As a result, many children including those in booster seats may be placed by parents in the front seat of a motor vehicle. This bill is based on the best industry research and best practices in ensuring that children under the age of 13 are seated in the safest place possible, the rear passenger seats, whenever possible.

Children who are in the front seat are at a 40% higher risk of injury than those in rear seats.* We stand with the American Academy of Pediatrics and AAA in support of the rear seat standard for children. This bill takes a significant step forward towards safety for all children by including this standard in Massachusetts' existing child passenger safety law.

Safe Kids appreciates this opportunity to be heard on issues vital to keeping our kids safe on the road and in motor vehicles. We ask this body to vote favorably on this bill and as soon as possible so that it might quickly find its way to Governor Baker's desk.

Sincerely,



Deirdre Walsh
Coalition Leader
Safe Kids Massachusetts



Anthony Green
Director, Public Policy
Safe Kids Worldwide

* Durbin D, Chen I, Smith R, Elliott M, Winston F, Effects of Seating Position and Appropriate Restraint Use on the Risk of Injury to Children in Motor Vehicle Crashes, Pediatrics, March 2005. Accessed April 10, 2017, available at http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/115/3/e305.long?utm_source=TrendMD&utm_medium=TrendMD&utm_campaign=Pediatrics_TrendMD_0



1255 23rd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
www.safekids.org | @SafeKids

Anthony Green
Director, Public Policy | SKWAdvocate
202.662.0606 | agreen@safekids.org