



March 5, 2018

Honorable Anna Caballero  
California General Assembly  
Capitol Office, Room 5158  
Sacramento CA 94249-0030

Dear Assembly Member Caballero:

We write in support of your bill, AB-3077, to make California's kids safer on our roads. The bill seeks to strengthen our state's child safety law in two ways: by making our state's mandatory child helmet law genuinely enforceable and effective, and allowing communities to utilize cameras on the side of school buses to deter school bus passers. These common-sense initiatives can make a tangible difference in keeping our children safe on our roads and on the way to and from school.

### **Making Our Bike Helmet Law Enforceable**

California has had a child bike helmet law since 1963. It is important because helmets are proven to be effective in reducing the impact or force of a collision to the head. Their design absorbs and distributes the impact and can significantly reduce the severity of injury. They are believed to be the leading reason for lowering the percentage of bike-related deaths in children by 62 percent since 1999.<sup>1 2</sup>

Based on that knowledge, California law requires that all children under age 18 to wear bike helmets. Failure to do so could result in a fine of up to \$250. But, according to the California Unintentional Injury Prevention Strategic Plan Project, the law is not being enforced—and it needs to be. The consensus is that the steep fine discourages enforcement of the law. AB-3077 would make the law more effective by limiting fines to \$25 for the first offense, and allowing a citation to be waived if the parent demonstrates they purchased a helmet and that the child pledges to wear it. We urge passage of this provision to truly encourage the use of bike helmets through practical regulation, viable enforcement and the awareness that the new law would promote.

### **Discouraging School Bus Passers**

We must also protect children from irresponsible drivers who speed past stopped school bus arms. California law forbids drivers from passing a stopped school bus when the flashing red lights are displayed and/or a stop signal arm is visible.<sup>3</sup> It is a serious traffic violation. According to the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) more than 70,000 drivers illegally pass stopped school buses that are dropping-off and picking up children every day.

There is a common sense, cost effective measure that can help enforce school bus passing laws. At least twelve states, including Maryland, Virginia, Connecticut, New Jersey and Washington, are using cameras on the side of school buses to ticket and discourage school bus passers.<sup>4</sup> These devices have proven to be an efficient deterrent. For example, in Carroll County, Maryland, violations have decreased around 37% in Maryland since the cameras were installed in 2011.<sup>5</sup> School buses remain the safest mode of school transportation, and passing this provision would make it even safer.

## Meet Safe Kids

Safe Kids Worldwide is a 30-year-old organization dedicated to the mission of preventing unintentional injury involving children under age 19—the number one cause of death of children in the U.S. Among the child safety risks it addresses involve school zone pedestrian safety and bike safety, all informed by evidence-based research. Safe Kids Worldwide is a grass-roots organization with over 420 coalitions in the U.S. and more than 30 around the world. Organized under Safe Kids California, based at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, there are 22 coalitions throughout the state.

## Conclusion

Safe Kids California and Safe Kids Worldwide support proven, sensible pieces of legislation like AB3077 to keep our youngest generation of Californians safer while riding a bike or taking a bus to school. We thank you for your work on this matter.

Sincerely,

Safe Kids California, Helen Arbogast

Safe Kids Central Valley, Kristina Pasma

Safe Kids Inland Empire, Michelle Parker

Safe Kids Los Angeles East, Bernadette Abou-Harb

Safe Kids Los Angeles West, Chantel Lowery

Safe Kids Mono Partners, Debie Schnadt

Safe Kids San Diego, Mary Beth Moran

Safe Kids Sonoma County, Karli Tedeschi

Safe Kids Santa Barbara Cottage, Gena Topping

Safe Kids Santa Clara/San Mateo, Emily Gudaitis

Safe Kids Stanislaus, Rena Lepard





<sup>1</sup> "Why are Helmets Needed?" World Health Organization, available at [http://www.who.int/roadsafety/projects/manuals/helmet\\_manual/1-Why.pdf](http://www.who.int/roadsafety/projects/manuals/helmet_manual/1-Why.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> "Bicycle, Skate and Skateboard Safety Fact Sheet," Safe Kids Worldwide, 2016, available at [https://www.safekids.org/sites/default/files/documents/skw\\_bike\\_fact\\_sheet\\_2016.pdf](https://www.safekids.org/sites/default/files/documents/skw_bike_fact_sheet_2016.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> California Rules of the Road, section 22454, available at [http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=22454.&lawCode=VEH](http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=22454.&lawCode=VEH)

<sup>4</sup> Bergal J, "School bus cameras start to catch those who don't stop," 4.4.2015, available at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/04/04/stateline-school-bus-stops/25292461/>

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