



February 5, 2018

Honorable Eileen Filler-Corn
Delegate
Pocahontas Building, Room: E210
900 E. Main St.
Richmond, VA 23219
DeleFiller-Corn@house.virginia.gov

Dear Delegate Filler-Corn:

Safe Kids Virginia and its coalitions stand together in support of HB 708, a bill which will make Virginia kids safer by requiring them to remain placed in rear-facing car seats through age 2 or when the child reaches the weight or height limit recommended by the car seat's manufacturer. This is consistent with the recommended guidelines issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2011, which strongly urges parents to keep their kids rear-facing through age 2.¹ Nine states have passed legislation consistent with HB 708.² This is why:

First, the recommendation is based on the physiology of a small child's body. Developmentally, a child younger than 2 years of age has a large head in proportion to the rest of his or her body, as well as structural features of their neck and spine that place the infant at particularly high risk of head and spine injuries in motor vehicle crashes.¹ "A rear-facing child safety seat does a better job of supporting the head, neck and spine of infants and toddlers in a crash, because it distributes the force of the collision over the entire body," says Dennis Durbin, M.D., F.A.A.P., a pediatric emergency physician whose research formed the basis for the AAP position.³ Evidence from Sweden shows that rear-facing car seats reduce the likelihood of injury to children in a crash by 90 percent when compared to being unrestrained.⁴

Second, physics and gravity prove that the small children are safer in rear-facing seats. As Dr. Durbin stated, in a frontal collision, a rear-facing car seat will protect the head, neck and spine of a child as it rotates down toward the front of the vehicle. However, if the seat is forward-facing, the car seat will rotate down and forward, and the child will be flung forward towards the harness and the car seat shell. The small child's head is heavy and will not have the support it needs. Similar factors come into play in side impact crashes.

For the first time in many years, road crash-related fatalities are increasing throughout the nation. And, while the sample size is small, between 2014 and 2016, the number of child road fatalities involving children 8 and under in Virginia almost tripled from 5 to 14.

Throughout Virginia, Safe Kids coalitions and certified technicians help parents correctly install car seats based on their age, height and weight. Our longstanding rear-facing recommendation is grounded in evidence. Based on the foregoing evidence, we support HR 708 and stand ready to assist you in your efforts to pass it. Thank you for your commitment on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Corri Miller-Hobbs
Coalition Coordinator
Safe Kids Virginia

¹ "Policy Statement—Child Passenger Safety, Pediatrics, April 2011, available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2011/03/21/peds.2011-0213.full.pdf>

² California, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma and Oregon.

³ "AAP Updates Recommendation on Car Seats," American Academy of Pediatrics, 3.21.2011, available at <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/aap-updates-recommendation-on-car-seats.aspx>

⁴ Durbin, D, "Technical Report—Child Passenger Safety," American Academy of Pediatrics, 2011, available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2011/03/21/peds.2011-0215.full.pdf>

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