



February 12, 2018

Honorable Brandon T. Todd  
Councilmember  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Suite 105  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Councilmember Todd:

Safe Kids DC and Safe Kids Worldwide stand together in support of B22-661, the Rear-Facing Car Seat Safety Amendment Act of 2018. The bill will make DC kids safer by requiring them to remain in rear-facing car seats through age 2 or until the child reaches 40 pounds or 40 inches in height. This is consistent with the recommended guidelines issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2011.<sup>1</sup> Nine states have passed similar legislation.<sup>2</sup> 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 their body, as well as structural features of their neck and spine that place them at particularly high risk of head and spine injuries in motor vehicle crashes.<sup>1</sup> "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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

Second, physics and gravity prove that small children are safer in rear-facing seats. 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. Between 2014 and 2016, there was a 19 percent increase in deaths of motor vehicle occupants ages 0-8 years. We must take action to reverse this trend by passing stronger laws and raising awareness about child passenger safety.

Children's National Health System is our lead agency and the premier provider of pediatric care in our nation's capital. It is also the parent organization of Safe Kids Worldwide, founded 30 years ago. We thank you for your commitment to DC children and stand ready to support you in your efforts to pass the Rear-Facing Car Seat Safety Amendment Act of 2018.

Sincerely,

Chenille Holloman  
Coalition Manager  
Safe Kids DC

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<sup>1</sup> “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>

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

<sup>3</sup> “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>

<sup>4</sup> 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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