



February 15, 2018

The Honorable George Till
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Representative Till:

We write in support of your initiative to change Vermont's seatbelt law from secondary to primary enforcement to save lives and make police enforcement more effective, H 691. Congratulations on the strong vote in its favor in the House. Vermont law already mandates all drivers and passengers over the age of 16 wear a seatbelt but lacks a key enforcement mechanism that would bolster seatbelt usage for older drivers, especially those carrying children. Vermont must strengthen its efforts to increase seatbelt usage and improve road safety.

For the first time in decades, motor vehicle fatalities are on the rise in the United States. Unfortunately, Vermont is not an exception to this trend. Deaths in Vermont rose by over 45 percent between 2014 and 2016. Crash data also shows the tragic consequences of failing to use seatbelts in road fatalities in Vermont. Last year, more than half of those who lost their lives on Vermont roads were unbelted.¹ Turning around Vermont's trend of increasing road deaths must be a priority.

Seatbelts are proven to reduce one's risk of dying in a car crash by 45 percent and serious injury by 50 percent. On average, the 34 states with primary enforcement laws have a 12 percent higher usage rate² than Vermont, which remains near 80 percent.³ In addition, Vermont has 21 percent more occupant deaths per 100,000 residents than other primary enforcement states, such as Connecticut which averages 8.2 deaths per 100,000 residents.⁴ By changing from secondary to primary enforcement, the UNC Highway Safety Research Center estimates that Vermont can increase seatbelt usage by at least 8 percent and decrease vehicle driver deaths by more than 7 percent.⁵

Furthermore, adult seatbelt usage will send a positive message to children in the car about road safety. When an adult prioritizes safety by always wearing their seatbelt, they lead by example and emphasize the importance and efficacy of buckling up. Safe kids start with safe parents, and this is how we work together to achieve greater road safety.

Primary seatbelt enforcement is one measure proven to save lives. We thank you for your work on this matter and stand ready to work with you for its passage in the Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "C. Keating".

Christina Keating
Coalition Coordinator
Safe Kids Vermont



¹ VTrans Office of Highway Safety: Highway Safety Data Unit. Available at: <http://vermonthighwaysafety.org/data/>

² <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812351>

³ <http://ghsp.vermont.gov/sites/ghsp/files/documents/20170201%20UVM-TRC-17-001.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/general-statistics/fatalityfacts/state-by-state-overview>

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/calculator/factsheet/seatbelt.html>

Contact:

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