



March 5, 2019

The Honorable Robert Manger
Oklahoma House of Representatives
2300 N Lincoln Boulevard, Room 302B
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Representative Manger:

Thank you for your leadership in introducing HB 1936, a bill which would mandate proven occupant protection practices by all riders in a motor vehicle under the age of 18. Currently, Oklahoma child passenger safety law allows children 8 years old or older to ride without a seat-belt in a vehicle. We strongly endorse this legislation because car crashes are among the leading causes of child fatalities. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), car crashes are the number one cause of unintentional deaths for children 5 to 19 years old in Oklahoma.¹ Between 2016 and 2017, there was a 23 percent increase in child fatalities of children ages 8-17 who were unrestrained in a crash.² In 2017, 29 Oklahoma children under 18 died in crashes and another 213 children were seriously injured.³

On July 17, 2017, a tragic crash occurred in McClain County in our state which shows how critical the need is to strengthen this law. Erin Van Horn was driving north on I-35 carrying her three children and three of their friends home from an outing when their SUV suddenly crashed into the back of a stopped tractor-trailer. The crash killed Erin, her 10-year-old son Zachary, 11-year old Beck Kitterman and his 13-year-old sister Lizzie Edwards. We know that neither Zachary nor Beck were properly restrained at the time of the crash. Further, Oklahoma law would not require any of the children who died to have been buckled up.⁴

Safe Kids Worldwide is a grass roots nonprofit working to prevent childhood injury, the number one cause of death for children in the United States. Safe Kids works with an extensive network of more than 417 U.S. coalitions based at pediatric and medical institutions, firehouses, police stations and health departments. As a trusted, go-to resource for parents, we educate on how to prevent injury and advocate for smart public policy to reduce road related injuries, pedestrian fatalities, drownings, burns, poisonings and more. Our network in Oklahoma is led by Safe Kids Oklahoma, based at the Children's Center Rehabilitation Hospital.

This bill will continue Oklahoma's tradition of forward-thinking child safety laws. We support the passage of HB 1936, to keep Oklahoma kids safer on roads and prevent further tragedies. Thank you for your consideration and support on this issue, and we are ready to help in any way we can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony Green". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Anthony Green
Chief Advocacy and Network Officer
Safe Kids Worldwide

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kimberly Gray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

Kim Gray
Coalition Coordinator
Safe Kids Oklahoma



¹ National Injury and Violence Prevention Resource Center. (2016). *2015 Oklahoma State Fact Sheet*. Children's Safety Network. Available at:

<https://www.childrenssafetynetwork.org/sites/childrenssafetynetwork.org/files/Oklahoma%202015%20Stat%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

² Oklahoma Highway Safety Office. (2019). *HB1936 – Child Passenger Safety Law Update*. Internal OHSO document: Unpublished. Oklahoma Department of Public Safety.

³ Oklahoma Highway Safety Office. (2019). *2017 Oklahoma Crash Facts*. Oklahoma Department of Public Safety. Available at:

http://ohso.publishpath.com/Websites/ohso/images/CrashBooks/2017/2017FB_S2_Crash_Section.pdf

⁴ KJRH. (2017, August 9). *OHP report: Driver of SUV in deadly Purcell crash was distracted*. Available at:

<https://www.kjrh.com/news/local-news/ohp-report-driver-of-suv-in-deadly-purcell-crash-was-distracted>