

# HB24-1055: Modernize Colorado's Child Passenger Safety Laws

Sponsors: Representatives Froelich and Pugliese and Senators Winter and Priola

*Motor vehicle injuries are a leading cause of death among children in Colorado, although many of these deaths can be prevented. Parents and caregivers can reduce the risk of serious injuries and deaths by up to 80% by making sure children are properly buckled in the correct car seat or booster seat based on the child's age and size. To keep kids safe, Colorado must modernize the state's car seat laws alignment with national guidelines.*

## Motor Vehicle Injuries and Deaths among Children

In 2022, Colorado saw the most traffic deaths on state roads since the early 1980s. Total yearly traffic fatalities are on the rise over the past 10 years, up 57 percent. For 30 years, rate of crashes decreased, but have increased over the past 10 years.<sup>1</sup> Given the large amount of time children spend traveling in vehicles, we need to ensure they are as safe and protected as possible when considering the increases in crashes and deaths across the state.

Cars remain a leading cause of death for kids - from 2015 to 2019, 48 children under age 8 were killed in passenger vehicle crashes.<sup>2</sup> The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) estimates that 59% to nearly 84% of kids are improperly restrained while riding in a vehicle. Motor vehicle deaths were the second leading cause of death for child deaths reviewed by CFPS from 2017-2021. During this period, 246 motor vehicle and other transportation deaths occurred among infants, children, and youth ages 0-17 in Colorado.<sup>3</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), in 2018, motor vehicle crash deaths cost Colorado over \$943 million, and children (ages 0-14) accounted for 6% of all deaths.<sup>4</sup>

## Improving Common Sense Safety Measures and Prioritizing Prevention and Access

- Update Rear-Facing Standards until age two: 23 states and the District of Columbia require children younger than two be in a rear-facing car safety seat.
  - The American Academy of Pediatrics updated their car seat guidelines in 2018, recommending that infants and toddlers ride in a rear-facing car safety seat as long as possible, until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car seat manufacturer.<sup>5</sup>
- Support Booster Seat Protections: Research shows that proper restraint use decreases as children get older. Booster seat use reduces the risk for serious injury by 45% when compared with seat belt use alone.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to updating child passenger restraint laws, it's critical we pair the safety updates with opportunities for certification of child passenger safety technicians, providing educational opportunities for families and caregivers, and bolster car seat distribution programs for families who have a child of car seat age to ensure access. The grant program is a critical element because:

- Car seat distribution programs provide car seats and life-saving education on proper use and installation of seats. Effective interventions can increase restraint use among child motor vehicle occupants and help limit or prevent crash-related fatalities and injuries. Evidence has demonstrated that child passenger restraint laws, incentive and distribution programs, and education programs are effective in increasing use of car seats and booster seats while decreasing child deaths and injuries, especially when these programs are combined.<sup>8</sup>

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## Supporters of HB24-1055 include:

- AAA Colorado
- Adams County Health Department
- American Academy of Pediatrics, Colorado Chapter
- Children's Hospital Colorado
- Colorado Access
- Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials
- Colorado Children's Campaign
- Colorado Hospital Association
- Colorado Rural Health Center
- Colorado State Fire Chiefs
- Colorado State Patrol Association
- Craig Hospital
- Denver Health & Hospital Authority