



March 9, 2011

Maryland House of Delegates  
House Environmental Matters Committee  
House Office Building, Room 251  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Members of the House Environmental Matters Committee:

On behalf of Safe Kids USA, a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, I want to express our support for HB 564, the proposed upgrade to Maryland's safety belt law.

As you may know, motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for children ages 2 to 15 in the U.S. In 2007, an average of 548 children ages 14 and younger were injured and 5 killed each day in motor vehicle crashes throughout the country. Unrestrained children are more likely to be injured, to suffer more severe injuries and to die in motor vehicle-related crashes than children who are restrained.

We know that strong occupant protection laws that are consistently enforced are one of the best ways to prevent injuries and save children's lives. We applaud the provision in HB 564 that would ensure that all motor vehicle occupants ride properly restrained in either a safety belt or, as dictated by Maryland's child passenger safety law (Section 22-412.2), a child safety seat. To that end, Safe Kids encourages a clear reference to Section 22-412.2 in the proposed legislation; the bill currently states in Section 22-412.3, "Unless a person is restrained by a seat belt or a child safety seat, the person may not be a passenger in a motor vehicle." We believe it is important to clarify that children should follow Maryland's existing child restraint law. As written now, it could be interpreted that either a safety belt or a child safety seat was suitable for each passenger in a motor vehicle.

If Safe Kids can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me at 202/662-0606 or [tross@safekids.org](mailto:tross@safekids.org). Thank you for your consideration of this important safety initiative.

Sincerely,

Tanya Chin Ross  
Director of Public Policy