



Testimony of
Children's National Medical Center

Before the
Maryland General Assembly's
House Environmental Matters Committee

HB 1169
All-Terrain Vehicles - Protective Equipment

Presented by:
Joseph L. Wright, MD, MPH
Senior Vice President
Child Health Advocacy Institute

State EMS Medical Director for Pediatrics
Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS)

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Children's National Medical Center (Children's National) commends Delegate Bill Bronrott for his leadership in introducing HB 1169 and is pleased to offer testimony in support of this important legislation.

Children's National Medical Center, a 283 bed not-for-profit academic medical center, has provided hope to sick children and their families throughout the Washington metropolitan region for more than 135 years. Located just three miles from the Maryland border, Children's National annually devotes nearly 60% of its inpatient care to children from Maryland. With five outpatient centers in Maryland and specialty care services provided in eight Maryland locations, Children's National is proud to provide high quality pediatric primary, specialty and emergency care to Maryland's children and families.

Children's National is designated by MIEMSS as one of only two Level I Pediatric Trauma Centers for the entire state. As a result, approximately half of the pediatric trauma patients in Maryland, mostly from Prince George's, Montgomery, and the Southern Maryland counties, are treated at Children's National. In fact, according to the latest MIEMSS statistics, 886 children from Maryland were treated at Children's Trauma Center from June 2007 to May 2008. Children's National treats more pediatric trauma cases than any other facility in the state.

Although a small percentage of Children's overall trauma cases, the number of emergency department visits resulting from operating or riding an all terrain vehicle (ATV) has increased over the last decade. Since the late 1980's, Children's emergency department has treated over 150 ATV-related trauma cases, 40 percent of which originated in Southern Maryland. Over 130 of those cases occurred since 2000. Over 33 percent of those injuries occurred on private lands, which include homes, farms and ATV recreational parks.

40 percent of the ATV-related traumas treated at Children's involve head/facial injuries, and according to information collected in the emergency department, nearly 50 percent of these victims were not wearing protective head gear. The consequences of ATV-related head injuries can be devastating, but particularly so for children whose bodies and minds are still growing and maturing. Children involved in ATV accidents who do not wear protective head gear often suffer concussions, facial and cerebral lacerations and contusions and even worse, intracranial hemorrhages.

Cerebral contusions are bruises on the brain, usually caused by a direct, strong blow to the head. Cerebral lacerations are tears in brain tissue, which often accompany visible head wounds and skull fractures. An intracranial hemorrhage, or bleeding of the brain, is a serious medical emergency because the buildup of blood within the skull can lead to increases in intracranial pressure, which can crush delicate brain tissue or limit its blood supply.

Beyond the physical and emotional devastation of these preventable injuries is the economic impact to families, governments and the health care system in general. According to recent studies, the average national annual cost of nonfatal ATV-related injuries treated in an emergency department for youths under 17 years is more than \$1.4 billion. In comparison, the cost of a National Transportation and Safety Administration approved ATV helmet can range between \$90-\$140.

The State of Maryland has taken positive steps to reduce ATV-related injuries. For example, children under age 12 are currently barred from operating ATVs on certain public lands. Children's National applauds MIEMSS for its 2007 report, "Report on Off-Road Vehicle Incidents including All-Terrain Vehicles In The State of Maryland," which concluded that the state should convene a task force to offer detailed recommendations regarding the use of ATVs. Children's National commends Delegate Sue Kullen and Senator Jennie Forehand for enacting legislation in 2008 to create this task force. Dr. Randall Burd, who serves as Chief of Trauma and Burns at Children's National, participated on this task force.

However, there are no regulations requiring children to wear protective headgear on ATVs. Currently, 27 states require ATV operators to wear helmets and other forms of safety equipment. Children's National Medical Center believes children and families in Maryland would benefit significantly by joining these states and enacting protective headgear requirements.

Studies examining the effectiveness of helmet laws find death rates in states without laws requiring either helmets or other protective gear are approximately two times as high as those in states with protective gear laws. In addition, studies show that children harmed in accidents involving ATVs suffer less serious injuries if they are wearing helmets.

Children's National Medical Center is committed to policies that improve the health and well-being of the children we serve. In fact, it is part of Children's National's mission to improve health outcomes for children regionally, nationally and internationally. As such, Children's National strongly believes that HB 1169 will help to reduce the severity of ATV-related injuries in children.

In conclusion, Children's National Medical Center respectfully urges the Committee to give a favorable report to HB 1169. Children's National believes this is a proactive step that will reduce the incidence of ATV-related head and facial injuries to children.