



Proponent Testimony, HB 536
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President, Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio
June 25, 2024

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for this opportunity today to provide testimony in support of House Bill 536.

I am Dr. Marie Schaefer, a family and sports medicine physician based in Cleveland and the president of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio. The AMCNO comprises 6,700 physicians and medical students in Northern Ohio and works to uphold the best practices of medicine and public health for our members and their patients. We are proud to be the stewards of Cleveland's medical community of the past, present and future.

The AMCNO has a long-standing history of supporting traffic safety laws. In April 1952, we issued our first call to action to our physician members to engage in traffic safety advocacy, as traffic accidents were the leading cause of death in young people. In subsequent years, we have advocated for both seat belt and car seat safety. Unfortunately, while deaths of children in car accidents have declined over time, crashes are still the cause of 1 in every 4 unintentional injury deaths in children.

We believe that House Bill 536 is a meaningful step towards reducing this statistic. By pushing the public to take seatbelt-wearing and proper car seat and booster seat practices more seriously, we can reduce the lethality of car crashes and save lives. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, car seats reduce the risk of fatal injury for infants by 71% and for toddlers by 54%. It is critical that we encourage motorists to take the best actions for their safety and the safety of their children on the road.

Additionally, we appreciate that the legislation offers a safety course for first time offenses rather than fines. As physicians, we know that education about the risk of behaviors can go much further in encouraging healthy choices than punishments. We do not believe that people who are not

wearing their seatbelts properly or whose car seats may not be appropriate for their children are intentionally putting themselves or their children at risk. Rather, it's clear that there is simply room for much more education about how truly lifesaving vehicle safety equipment is. That is why the AMCNO was such a strong proponent of seatbelt safety when it was first introduced in the mid-century, and why we continue to support legislation like this today.

It is for this reason that we ask that you support House Bill 536 and the life-saving impacts that it can have. Thank you.