

Alaska Legislature

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House Bill 308 Sponsor Statement

Motor vehicle injuries are a leading cause of death and injury among children in the United States. However, many of these deaths are preventable with the correct installation and use of child passenger safety devices, like car seats or booster seats. Car seat use reduces the risk for death to infants by 71%; and to toddlers by 54% in passenger vehicles. Booster seat use reduces the risk for serious injury by 45% for children aged 4–8 years when compared with seat belt use alone. The correct installation of any of these devices can alter their effectiveness dramatically, but many parents or caregivers accidentally misuse child restraints due to their complicated, unwieldy nature.

In Alaska, the Child Passenger Safety Coalition has made the goal of protecting children traveling on the roadways of Alaska their priority. Members include healthcare professionals, firefighters, paramedics, law enforcement officers, injury prevention professionals, health and safety personnel, educators, parents, businesses, foundations, policymakers, and volunteers. Their team of Child Passenger Safety Technicians perform checks and help with the installation of child passenger safety devices for any new or interested parent or caregiver. Technicians are certified after successfully completing a 3 or 4-day program of classroom and hands-on work with child restraints and motor vehicles then demonstrate their skills at a community CPS check-up event. The resulting certification as a Child Passenger Safety Technician is nationally recognized and valid for 2 years.

However, recruitment of new technicians can be difficult due to a lack of liability protection. To remedy this deficit of trained safety experts who provide essential assistance to parents, caregivers, and most importantly children, House Bill 308 limits the civil liability of certified technicians, or those who facilitate their program, in the case that an accident results from an act or omission in the inspection, installation, or adjustment of a child passenger safety device. With the goal of having our state's children safe and secured in their car seats and booster seats, this bill hopes to increase the numbers of those who can effectively install and inspect devices and direct liability to those who actually commit wrongful, criminal acts.