

**Testimony of Anthony Green, Director of Public Policy, Safe Kids Worldwide,
on HB308 Relating to Immunity for Car Seat Technicians
In the Legislature of the State of Alaska
March 28, 2016**

I want to thank Leader Millett for inviting Safe Kids Worldwide to participate in this hearing and, more importantly, to express our appreciation to Leader Millett for her leadership in introducing HB308. I also want to applaud the voice and work of Sara Penisten, our coalition leader in the State of Alaska.

The effort to place children in car seats has been part of the equation which has reduced road fatalities involving kids 19 and under by 55% between 2000 and 2014. "Buckling up" both child restraints and seat belts has saved many lives. When installed and used correctly, child safety seats and safety belts save lives. Child safety seats can reduce fatal injury by up to 71 percent for infants and 54 percent for toddlers (ages 1 to 4). However, a car seat which is installed incorrectly can be useless.

Are car seats installed incorrectly? Yes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration conducted a nationwide field study in 2011 based on 4,167 inspections and driver interviews, and found that 46% of car seats were installed or used incorrectly. If a child restraint system is not used correctly, it may be 46 percent less effective in providing protection in the event of a crash. And this is why the work of child passenger safety technicians is so important.

Let me share a brief story about two children in another cold place, Wisconsin. It was June, 2014 when Bethany Olson and her two children survived a severe crash in Baldwin, Wisconsin colliding with a cattle trailer. Two-year-old Gunner was released from the hospital the same day while 14-month-old Emmajean was treated for a traumatic brain injury and has now fully recovered. Two weeks before the crash, their mother attended a car seat check-up event to make sure the seats were placed in the car properly. When the crash occurred, the kids were properly seated and Mrs. Olson credits the correct car seat placement for saving the lives of her kids. I can tell you a similar story about a Maine child in a seat which had been recently checked by a technician who survived a rollover crash with barely a scratch.

This would not be possible but for the work of child seat technicians, a large majority of whom are volunteers. Safe Kids Worldwide is the entity which runs the education program that certifies the technicians to do their work. It is a rigorous course and continuing education is required.

The men and women who conduct this service do so largely as volunteers. Immunity from civil liability should not be granted lightly. We appreciate that Leader Millett has carefully drafted a bill which strikes an appropriate balance. It would be enjoyed by currently certified technicians for no fee for their work and when act in good faith, and provides similar immunity to organizations who set up the event or hold it on their property. The immunity would not apply when a check-up event is held in concert with the for-profit sale of a car seat, nor would it cover gross negligence.

We are aware of no case which has been filed involving a car seat technician in the line of duty, and we hope that this grant of immunity will never be used. However, for this special class of volunteers providing a life-saving purpose, this provision of immunity is appropriate and appreciated. It provides them with a safe harbor to do their important volunteer work. We hope the Legislature will pass HB308.

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