



Representative Lindsey Holmes

Sponsor Statement

HB 131 - Child Safety Seats and Seat Belts

Booster seats save lives. Of the 61 children under the age of eight injured in auto accidents in Alaska between 2001 and 2005, only five were considered properly restrained by federal standards. Nearly two thirds of those 61 children were between the ages of four to eight, making the injured too large for a car seat but too small for an adult seat belt.

Current Alaska law requires the use of proper safety devices for children under the age of 16 as approved by the US Department of Transportation. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends that children under 80 pounds and under 57'' use a child safety seat or a belt positioning booster seat. HB 131 puts USDOT National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommendations in statute, clarifying for law enforcement officials what devices are required for proper child restraint.

All safety devices, boosters and child seats must meet or exceed the standards set out by the United States Department of Transportation.

As of September 2008 43 other states mandate booster seat use. While any restraint is better than no restraint, national studies have shown booster seats to be sixty percent safer than seat belts alone when used by children of the correct height, weight and age. The rough cost of a booster seat ranges from \$25 to \$100, depending on the model. By passing this legislation, the state of Alaska will become eligible for close to \$200,000 in federal highway safety funds.

Please join me in promoting passenger safety by supporting this legislation.