



March 17, 2009

To the House Transportation Committee:

**Vote YES on Senate Bill 72**

As president of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), I urge you to support **Senate Bill 72**, legislation that will save the lives of children in Alaska. **SB 72** would require children age four to age eight, who are less than 57 inches in height, and weigh between 20 and 80 pounds, to be secured in a vehicle with a child booster seat that meets federal safety standards. Advocates is a nonprofit coalition of consumer, safety, medical, law enforcement, and insurance organizations working to improve highway safety, and booster seat laws are one of our top priorities.

This bill is common sense legislation supported by science. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the American Academy of Pediatrics, and The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, booster seats are critical for children who have outgrown child safety seats but are not big enough for adult seat belts to fit them properly. Children who are not restrained in a booster seat are 3.5-times more likely to suffer a serious injury and four times more likely to suffer a significant head injury than if they were properly restrained. Booster seats reduce the risk of injury by 59 percent compared to the use of seat belts only. Nearly every state has some form of a booster seat requirement, and Alaska needs to join these ranks by adopting this lifesaving legislation.

Some opponents of booster seat legislation argue that the decision about protecting a child in a booster seat should be left to the parent or caregiver. While the safety of a child is the responsibility of parents and caregivers, they rely on state law to set the standard for proper protection in motor vehicles, as is the case with child safety seat and seat belt laws. Other opponents of this bill argue that parents and caregivers are already too burdened with things they need to do for their children, and car-pooling presents challenges. If parents and caregivers are willing to transport children with sports equipment to protect them from getting injured on the soccer field, they surely should be concerned about a child's life while riding in a motor vehicle, the most dangerous activity of the day. Another misconception is that booster seats are very costly. Many booster seats cost approximately the same as a tank of gas.

A 2004 Lou Harris public opinion poll commissioned by Advocates found that over 80 percent of those surveyed support extending child safety seat laws to include booster seats. For this and all the other reasons state above, **we urge you to vote YES on SB 72.**

Sincerely,

Judith Lee Stone, President  
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety