

House Committee on Transportation  
October 27, 2021

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you yesterday in support of HB 4983 and 4984.

I wanted to follow up on two questions that came up during the course of my testimony that I wasn't able to answer at the time.

First, I was asked about the arrows in the graph from the New England Journal of Medicine article showing causes of child mortality. The arrows were actually added by a colleague and not part of the original article. However, this passage from the article may explain the patterns that are seen in the graph:

The rate of deaths from motor vehicle crashes among children and adolescents showed the most notable change over time (Figure 1), with a relative decrease of 38% between 2007 and 2016. This has been attributed to the widespread adoption of seat belts and appropriate child safety seats, the production of cars with improved safety standards, better constructed roads, graduated driver-licensing programs,<sup>8,9</sup> and a focus on reducing teen drinking and driving. Such reductions in mortality occurred despite increases in the overall number of U.S. vehicles and annual vehicle-miles traveled.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, there was a reversal of this trend in mortality, with the rate increasing annually between 2013 and 2016. Although the cause of this reversal is not yet clear, it probably is multifactorial and includes such factors as an increase in distracted driving by teenagers<sup>11</sup> (e.g., because of peer passengers or cell-phone use).

Second, I was asked about the number of states that currently have statutes requiring rear-facing car seats in children under 2 years of age. Currently there are 23 states that have this requirement, in addition to Washington DC and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Finally, there was some discussion about the use of car seats in children with disabilities. The AAP has published a separate report on transportation of such children—I have included the reference below.

Thanks again. Please feel free to reach out if you have any additional questions.

Jonathan Gold, MD FAAP  
Chair, Government Affairs and Advocacy Committee  
Michigan Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

**References:**

1. Cunningham RM et al. The Major Causes of Death in Children and Adolescents in the United States. *N Engl J Med* 2018; 379:2468-2475. DOI: 10.1056/NEJMs1804754
2. Governor's Highway Safety Association. <https://www.ghsa.org/state-laws/issues/child%20passenger%20safety> Accessed October 26, 2021.
3. O'Neil J, Hoffman B. Transporting Children With Special Health Care Needs. *Pediatrics* May 2019, 143 (5) e20190724; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2019-0724