



Testimony of Brittany Tayler, MD  
House Transportation Committee  
Support for House Bills 4511 and 4512

Good morning, my name is Brittany Tayler. I am a pediatrician in Flint, MI. Today, I am speaking on behalf of the Michigan Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics in support of House Bills 4511 and 4512. These bills make important updates to our laws regarding car seat use in Michigan.

The underlying basis of this legislation is clear. Motor vehicle accidents are the second leading cause of death of children in the United States. Studies conclude that “car seat use reduces the risk for an injury in a crash by 71-82% for children, when compared to seatbelt use alone.” We also know that “booster seat use reduces the risk of serious injury by 45%.”

As a pediatrician, in addition to addressing the immediate health care needs of children, a big part of our job is prevention. I counsel parents about a number of issues that can pose a risk to the health of the child, including the age-appropriate use of a car seat. As you might imagine, and for those of you who have had children can attest, being a parent or guardian can be an overwhelming time. It is difficult enough to navigate the best practices to keep your child safe, it is even more difficult when our state law is out of step with guidelines coming from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the recommendations from the manufacturers.

I want to tell you a story about a patient I cared for previously. I am boarded in internal medicine as well so I do take care of adults from time to time. During this time I cared for a 24 year old mother for several weeks following a car accident. She lost the lower half of her right arm, had a brain bleed requiring emergency surgery, a broken femur, required multiple reconstructive facial surgeries, and several crushed spinal vertebrae leaving her partially paralyzed. She had an agonizingly slow recovery over months, with her own mother spoon feeding her at times. Her husband died in the car accident as well as the family dog. Her daughter, who was in her car seat, was released the day following the accident with a broken clavicle but otherwise was unharmed. It cannot be overstated how important that car seat was in protecting that little girl’s life, especially when witnessing the devastation the crash had on the family.

As pediatricians, we understand that patient and family education is crucial to ensure guideline recommendations are being incorporated and to effectively prevent illness and injury in children. Similarly, House Bills 4511 and 4512 encourages compliance by taking an approach that is non-punitive. Allowing sanctions to be waived if the driver undergoes educational training related to the age-appropriate use and proper installation of the car seat or booster. Our interest in keeping kids safe not in collecting fines.

The technology of child restraint seats and the research surrounding their use has improved immensely over the past several years. Unfortunately, our state law has not kept up in this regard. Bringing our law into harmony with the recommendations of the manufacturer and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration guidelines is an important step in helping to prevent injuries from motor vehicle accidents, and keeping our kids safe.