

House Transportation Committee
Proponent for HB2008 – April Brenner
January 24, 2017

“Buckle up.” That’s the first thing I tell my children when we get in our vehicle. Thank you for taking the time to review this issue. I’m certainly not the first parent to ask the question “why don’t our children have to wear seat belts on the bus?” It is a state law that all drivers and passengers have to wear a seat belt in their vehicles. It is a written ticket if pulled over for the infraction. Why again don’t our children have to be buckled up on a commercial vehicle while going to and from school or school related activities? The driver’s are provided seat belts, so why aren’t our precious children? I’ve told only a few people about my forward motion on this issue. The few that I have spoken with have all voiced their opinion to me—“I’ve always wondered why they don’t have them on busses.” If it is a law, then why isn’t a law for ALL?

From my understanding, newly purchased busses are required to have seat belts. My family vehicle is a 1998 Dodge Durango. We recently had to install different seat belts in the vehicle as the old ones needed replaced. We understand that our children should never be in a vehicle without a seat belt. If we were pulled over prior to replacing them, we would’ve been ticketed. I also feel strongly that we would’ve been questioned by our children why they don’t have to wear seat belts on the bus but have to in the family car. I find no reason every bus shouldn’t be equipped with a seat belt. I understand education funds are on the decline in recent years. However, we do all that we can in schools to protect our children and teach them about the law (i.e. D.A.R.E programs, bullying assemblies, law enforcement assemblies, safety assemblies) but they are not required to wear seat belts on the bus. It’s very contradicting for children to understand this law. I have trouble understanding it myself and I am a law-abiding citizen. We want our children to do what is right and law-abiding. It’s difficult for me when I have to explain to my children that busses don’t have seat belts but vehicles do. Children are black and white beings. This seat belt issue, for me, is a grey issue and difficult to explain to them.

I don’t take any injury lightly, especially head injuries. My daughter is a survivor of a skull fracture with hematoma. Luckily, she made a normal recovery. One day in 2016, her first year riding the bus, she got home and said her head hurt because when the bus went around a curve, another child leaned into her which caused my child to thrust into the window with her head. I feel that if both children would’ve been restrained from seat belts, this whole scene would’ve been eliminated. Another similar incident occurred with my son two years ago.

As they went around a curve, another child leaned into him and he hit his head on the window, causing a small laceration to his forehead. I know for certain it isn't because the bus driver was out of control. It happened coming home from school within city speed limits. My children have wonderful bus drivers.

My children are too young yet for public school sports events. We live in a rural community so most of our traveling occurs on rural roads. When my children get to activity age, I worry about them being on the bus at night coming home from events. During winter months, it is dark, wildlife moves more and weather can wreak havoc on road conditions. I would feel so much more confident in them riding the bus if they were properly restrained in seat belts.

Horseplay happens on busses. You can sit there and tell yourself that it doesn't, but it does. It doesn't matter how good of a bus driver one has; horseplay happens. Children mess around on the bus all the time. I've followed busses before in my vehicle from districts all over the state and I see children messing around constantly on the bus. I *strongly* believe this would be minimized if children were restrained. Sure, bus drivers are responsible for running a tight ship, but they also have to focus on driving and keeping the passengers safe and not constantly regulating behavior. I believe the bus driver would also appreciate seat belts restraining children, too, to keep horseplay to a minimum.