**LSR 20-2758**

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<th>Bill Number/Title:</th>
<th>LSR 20-2758: AN ACT relative to passenger restraints</th>
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| History/Context:  | **Introduction:** This bill aims to establish **secondary** seat belts requirements for all ages in the State of NH  
  - A primary seat belt law means that law enforcement can stop motorists solely for not wearing a seat belt.  
  - **Secondary** seat belt laws mean that drivers can only be ticketed for neglecting to use a seat belt after they have been stopped for another offense, such as a speeding violation.  

**History:**  
One of the safest choices drivers and passengers can make is to buckle up. Motor vehicle crashes are among the top ten causes of death for Americans of all ages and the leading cause of death for children, teens, and young adults (aged 5-34 years). In terms of years of life lost, motor vehicle crashes rank third, behind only cancer and heart disease and account for approximately $99 billion in medical and lost work costs annually. Crash-related deaths and injuries are largely preventable. Motor Vehicle safety is one of our nation’s 10 most significant public health achievements in the past 35 years, with 49/50 states enacting seat belt laws for adults. According to the National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration (NHTSA), states with stronger seat belt laws generally have higher rates of usage than those with weaker or no laws. New Hampshire remains the only state in the nation that does not require drivers or passenger ages 18 and over to buckle up.  

**New Hampshire Data**  
- The reported New Hampshire statewide seat belt usage rate for 2018 was 76.4%, The national average was 89.6%  
- The NHTSA estimates that if New Hampshire were to pass a seat belt law that seat belt usage could increase by approximately 12 percentage points.  
- The costs associated with failure to implement seat belt law are dispersed to the State’s budget in terms of Medicaid and other State medical expenditures, the individual residents of the State, private insurance companies, and the Federal Government.  
- NH law would reduce the burden of insurance companies by about $5.1 million from crashes occurring in a single year alone.  
  - The citizens of New Hampshire would directly benefit by a reduction of $1.2 million in insurance related costs.  
- Federal funds: FAST Act Behavioral Highway Safety Programs authorizes
$305 billion for highway and motor vehicle safety. Section 405 provides incentive grants to states with laws for “Occupant Protection”
  - NH receives ZERO funding due to lack of seatbelt laws for occupants ages 18 and older.

**Implications for Nursing**: Motor vehicle safety is a pertinent issue for nurses in all practice areas. Whether you provide acute care for patients who sustained injury in a motor vehicle collision in the ER or ICU, provide rehabilitation services for patients who are recovering from injury, provide long term care for patients who sustained traumatic brain injury or paralysis, or provide mental health services for survivors of crashes with fatalities: seat belt use saves lives and therefore is a high priority for nursing advocacy.

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<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
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| • Seat belt use in passenger vehicles saved an estimated 14,955 lives in 2017.  
  • If you buckle up in the front seat of a passenger car, you can reduce your risk of:  
    - Fatal injury by 45%  
    - Moderate to critical injury by 50%  
  • If you buckle up in a light truck, you can reduce your risk of:  
    - Fatal injury by 60%  
    - Moderate to critical injury by 65%  
  • Unrestrained rear seat passengers are 2 times more to sustain a fatal injury than restrained passengers.  
  • The estimated economic cost of all motor vehicle traffic crashes involving non-use of seatbelts in the US in 2010 was 10.4 billion dollars. Included in the economic costs are:  
    - Lost productivity, workplace losses, legal and court expenses, medical costs, emergency medical services (EMS), insurance administration costs, congestion costs, and property damage costs.  
  • When quality-of-life valuations are considered, the total value of societal harm from motor vehicle crashes involving non-use of seatbelts in the United States in 2010 was an estimated $68.6 billion. | • Secondary law vs. a primary law.  
  • Fines range from $25-$100.  
  • Opponents argue personal freedoms.  
  • Law does not guarantee 100% compliance with seat belt use. |

**Committee**: TBD: Likely Senate Transportation  
**Sponsors**: Not available at this time  
**Position**: Support
References:


