



**TESTIMONY
OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
Monday, February 24, 2003**

SB 603, An Act Requiring Booster Seats For Children Transported In Motor Vehicles

CHA appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of **SB 603, An Act Requiring Booster Seats For Children Transported In Motor Vehicles**.

CHA supports SB 603, which modifies current law on booster seat weight criteria for children. Currently, under Connecticut law, children under 4 years of age or 40 pounds must ride in a child restraint seat. SB 603 would extend current law to include children up to 8 years or 80 pounds. These guidelines would be consistent with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics. There is a mounting body of evidence that suggests that this increase would protect a group of children who often are not ready for a seat belt alone. The continued use of booster seats through age 8 or 80 pounds can reduce the risk of “lap belt syndrome”, which are injuries caused by a seat belt that is designed for an adult male. Instead of protecting children, seat belts can actually cause serious injury or death. A booster seat raises a child up so that the seat belt fits properly. This prevents a child from being thrown from a car, being tossed around the cabin or slipping under the seat belt during a collision. A misplaced seat belt can cause injury to the liver, spleen, intestines and spinal cord. There is also a greater risk for head injury. Booster seat-aged children restrained in seat belts only are 3 times more likely to suffer an injury than those in a booster seat. This law, if passed, would work to protect thousands of children at risk every day.

Connecticut’s emergency departments treat more than 125 booster seat-aged children for motor vehicle-related injuries every year. Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death for children over the age of one. Proper booster seat and seat belt usage can ensure that these children have the best chance to avoid injury and death in a serious collision.

A review of booster seat laws in other States shows that 13 states and the District of Columbia have passed comprehensive booster seat laws. Geographically, Maine, New Jersey and Rhode Island have passed laws similar to SB 603.

CHA supports Connecticut Safe Kids and its partner’s efforts to bring this law to pass.

For these reasons, CHA strongly urges the Committee to favorably report this bill out of committee.

Thank you for your consideration.