

AB 881 (Mullin) Protecting the Forgotten Child Strengthening California's Child Passenger Safety Standards

Current law requires children up to six years old or sixty pounds to ride in a child restraint device in the back seat. California needs to catch up with the other 23 states who protect their children with stronger child passenger safety laws. The proposed law, for which language has already been written, will:

- Extend the law to require children to ride in booster seats in the back until their 8th birthday.
- Define the law for infants to ride facing backward until they are at least one year old and at least 20 pounds.

Rationale:

- **Booster seats** are an affordable and easy way to protect our vulnerable six and seven year old children from their leading cause of death.
- Between 1999 and 2002, **53** Californian children (ages 6 and 7) **died** and **933** were injured in car crashes.
- Children who ride in **seat belts alone** are **4x more likely** to suffer serious head and brain injuries compared to those who use car or booster seats.
- **Using a booster seat**, instead of a seatbelt, **reduces a child's risk of injury by 59%**.
- Children 4-8 years old are **3x more likely** to be injured in a crash than an infant or toddler.
- **For every 100 children** who were killed in a crash wearing only a seat belt, **28 of them would have survived if they were in a car or booster seat.**
- Placing children in the **back seat**, **reduces overall injury risk by 40%**.
- Facing **infants backward**, **reduces risk of injury by 1/2**.
- A 2006 study from Indiana University, Department of Pediatrics, comparing education to legislation concludes: **"The frequency of children transported in booster seats increased 4 fold after the passage of legislation to require booster seats."**
- Passing this law will qualify California for **SAFETEA-LU Section 2011 funds** for booster seat education and low cost booster seats. The program is authorized at **\$6 million for FY 2006-2008 and \$7 million for FY 2009.**

These changes mirror the recommendations of:

- **Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety**
- **American Academy of Pediatrics**
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**
- **National Transportation Safety Board**

Sponsors of this proposal include:

- **California Coalition for Children's Safety and Health – Sponsor**
- **Safe Kids Worldwide - Sponsor**
- **Safety Belt Safe U.S.A.- Sponsor**

Support for this measure includes:

The medical community, law enforcement, insurance companies, public health community and child safety advocates. This measure, which passed the legislature last year, was unopposed.