

Kristin Bendickson

Proponent Testimony

Highways and Transportation Committee

Chairman Beuhrer and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kristin Bendickson and I am here today with my daughter Katie to share our story.

In May of 2004, our family was involved in a car accident that left our daughter, Katrina (Katie) who had just turned six at the time, with life threatening internal injuries. She was taken by Care Flight that night to Children's Medical Center in Dayton where they performed emergency surgery. Her spleen had been destroyed and she was bleeding internally which immediately required eight units of blood. She had two lacerations in her liver, a hole in her stomach which caused her intestines to become septic, several broken ribs and her lungs were bruised. When I was finally able to get to the hospital early the next morning I did not know walking through those doors whether or not she had survived the surgery. Thankfully she had made it through, however she was given only a small chance of survival. I was told that blunt force trauma had caused her injuries which were the direct result of an improperly positioned seat belt.

We were shocked. I had no idea injuries of that magnitude could occur in small children by wearing the seatbelt improperly--nor did I know much at all about the importance of having children of her age and size in booster seats. My husband and I had always been very aware and diligent about infant seats and their usage. How had we missed how important booster seats were for children 4 years of age and older?

I believe that there are many well-intentioned parents, like ourselves who simply don't know how important it is to have this particular group of children protected by simply using an appropriate booster seat. We look to

our pediatricians as well as the law for such guidance. This legislation would not only raise awareness as to the importance of booster seat usage, but it would help to hold parents accountable.

We are one of the lucky families. After eight days in intensive care and eight more days in the hospital, Katie came home. Today, other than not having her spleen and the preventative care that comes with that, Katie lives a normal ten year old life. The fact that she survived is nothing short of a miracle. There is a reason and purpose for her survival...for her life.

I believe that part of that purpose is to help raise awareness and educate other parents and caregivers on the vital importance of proper booster seat usage. The passage of this piece of legislation would go a long way in making that happen and in turn to saving children's lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our story and I would be happy to answer any questions.