



# Speak Up for Ohio's Children

## Let your state senator know you support HB 320!

The “booster seat bill” passed the Ohio House by a wide margin last spring—after languishing in the Senate for months, it may finally come up for a vote during the week of **December 15-19!**

This is the **last chance** to get a booster seat law enacted this year. Otherwise, we'll be back to square one and the bill will have to be reintroduced in the House and Senate next year.

Legislators want to do the right thing, but they also want to please voters. If the only voices they hear are against the bill, they won't vote for it. So speak up and let your voice be heard! **E-mail or phone your state senator and urge a “yes” vote on HB 320.**

Go to <http://www.senate.state.oh.us/senators/> to find your senator and follow the link to send a message  
Go to <http://www.injurypreventioncenter.com/blog/> for letter and postcard templates

### What's Ohio's current child passenger safety law?

Ohio law says all passengers under age 15 must be restrained. Children under age 4 are required to use age- and weight-appropriate safety devices, but the law does not specify how children 4 and over should be restrained. The law says it's fine to put a 4 to 7-year-old in a seat belt, so most parents do so.

### What's the issue?

Seat belts are designed for adults, not children. Booster seats help lift children up so seat belts fit properly across hips and shoulders—the strongest parts of their bodies—rather than soft tissue areas like abdomens, and help prevent injury to internal organs and spinal cords. For children aged 4 to 7 in rear seating positions, booster seat use decreases the risk of injury by 59%, compared to seat belts alone.

### What would the bill do?

House Bill 320 was introduced in January 2008 by Rep. Shannon Jones. The bill calls for all children under age 8 or less than 4'9" in height to be restrained in an appropriate car seat or booster seat. The bill would make enforcement primary, which research has shown to be the best incentive to encourage restraint use.

### Where did this 8 year/4'9" figure come from?

Children are ready for lap and shoulder belts alone when they can place their backs firmly against the vehicle seat back with their knees bent comfortably over the vehicle seat cushion. Lap belts should fit low and snug on the upper thighs and shoulder belts should rest over the shoulder and across the chest. Research shows that good fit is usually achieved by the time a child reaches 8 years of age, or earlier if the child has reached 4'9".

### Would this represent a hardship to Ohio families?

The cost to parents for taking this important step in protecting their children is minimal: booster seats cost less than \$20. Passing this law also would make the state eligible for federal funds to help publicize the new law and provide free booster seats to low-income families.

### How do we compare to the rest of the country?

Ohio is 1 of only 7 states that does not require booster seats for children who are too big for car seats but too small for seat belts alone. Not surprisingly, Ohio has one of the lowest booster seat usage rates in the country. Only 18% of Ohio children aged 4 to 7 currently use boosters. Parents look to the law for guidance, and Ohio law is failing children and families.