

Good morning. My name is Glenn Rowe, and I represent PennDOT's Highway Safety and Traffic Operations Division. On behalf of Secretary of Transportation Leslie Richards, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on the status on child occupant protection.

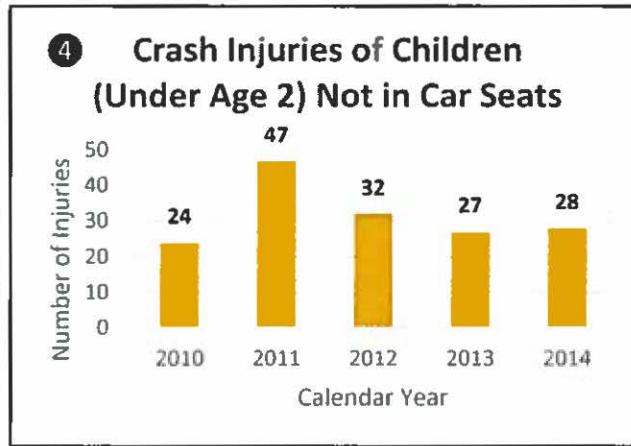
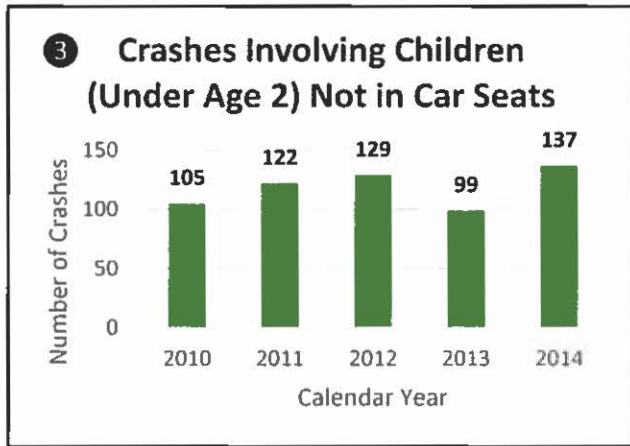
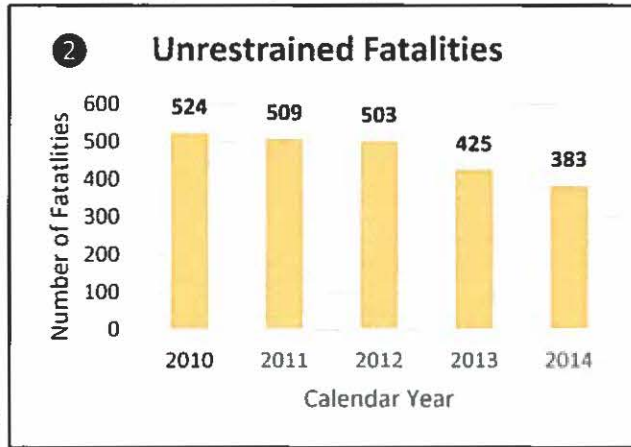
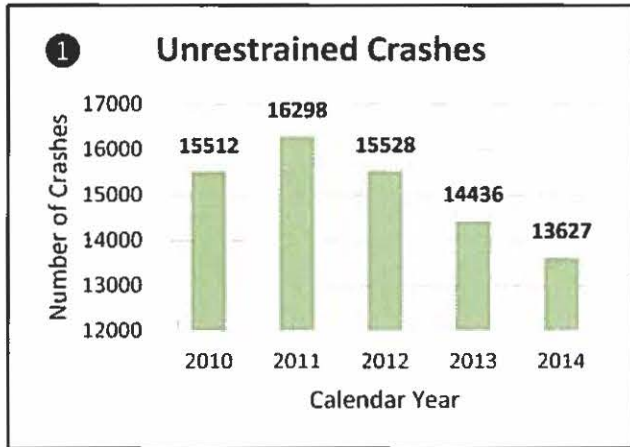
Reducing crashes and fatalities due to occupant protection is tied to one of the vital seven safety focus areas in our Strategic Highway Safety Plan and as such, the Department of Transportation dedicates funding to promote education associated with occupant protection. State crash data shows a 6% decrease¹ in unrestrained crashes and a 10% decrease² in unrestrained fatalities from 2013 to 2014. Specific to children under 2 years of age, the numbers show a 38% increase³ in crashes involving these children not using car seats while the number of crash injuries has remained level⁴ during that same period of time. Fortunately none of these injuries resulted in a fatality and according to police reports approximately 75% of the children not in a car seat appeared to have at least been restrained in some fashion. By way of comparison our state seatbelt utilization rate for last year was 83%⁵.

Currently, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has determined that the best practice is to have children remain rear-facing until age two⁶. Additionally, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends keeping children rear-facing until the child reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by the restraint's manufacturer, typically between ages one and three. A combination of these best practices, for example requiring "rear-facing up to age 2 or until the child outgrows the maximum weight and height limit allowed by the manufacturer" would provide the most comprehensive guidance to parents. Statistics⁷ have shown that children in the second year of life are five times less likely to die or be seriously injured if restrained rear-facing compared to forward-facing.

Our local safety partners and community outreach groups are encouraged to use the resources and public awareness materials from websites such as justdrivepa.org. As part of these outreach efforts, a national media campaign also occurs each year during Child Passenger Safety Week in September. During this year's campaign, 84 child safety seat events were conducted by the Pennsylvania State Police and other safety partners. A total of 933 car seats were checked during this timeframe. It is hoped that our outreach programs supported by the media campaign will result in a reduction of crashes and fatalities on our roadways due to occupant protection.

We would like to thank you for your continued interest in this topic as well as other safety issues that the Department faces. Our only suggestion would be to modify the bill to align with the combination of best practices for age, height and weight. We think this would strengthen the language and help eliminate confusion that parents may perceive based on national and state guidance. At this time, I am available to take any questions you may have. Thank you.

HB 1551 Testimony (Supporting Data)



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Durbin, Dennis. "Technical Report – Child Passenger Safety." *PEDIATRICS* 127.4 (2011): 1050-1066. Electronic

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Henry B, Sherwood CP, Crandall JR, et al. Car safety seats for children: rear facing for best protection. *Inj Prev.* 2007;13(6): 398–402

