

**Statement of Ted Leonard**  
**Executive Director, Pennsylvania AAA Federation**  
**To the House Transportation Committee**  
**Monday, December 7, 2015**

Good afternoon, Chairmen and members of the House Transportation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present our views and information on the issue of child passenger safety. My name is Ted Leonard and I am the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania AAA Federation which is the state association of the AAA clubs in Pennsylvania, encompassing over 3.1 million member-motorists.

We strongly support Representative Schlossberg's House Bill 1551 with an amendment to require all infants and toddlers to ride in a rear-facing safety seat until they are 2 years of age. They should continue to ride rear-facing until they reach the highest weight or height recommended by the manufacturer of the seat.

Although child passenger safety has dramatically evolved over the past decade, motor vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of death of children 4 years and older. Quoting Dr. Ben Hoffman of the American Academy of Pediatrics, " a 10 pound bowling ball dropped out of a 3<sup>rd</sup> story window would result in the Force of 330 lb. of Inertia; in a car travelling at 30 MPH hitting a tree, a 10 pound child would develop 450 lb. of Inertia. " The Academy, in a policy update published in *Pediatrics* in April 2011, advised parents to keep their toddlers in rear-facing cars seats until age 2, or until they reach the maximum height and weight for their seat. It also advises that most children will need to ride in a belt-positioning booster seat until they have reached 4 feet 9 inches tall and are between 8 and 12 years of age. The previous policy, from 2002, advised that it is safest for infants and toddlers to ride rear-facing up to the limits of the car seat, but also cited age 12 months and 20 pounds as the minimum. As a result, many parents turned the seat to face the front of the car when their child turned 1. Dr. Dennis Durbin, lead author of the Academy technical report, stated, "*A rear-facing child safety seat does a better job of supporting the head, neck and spine of infants and toddlers in a crash because it distributes the force of the collision over the entire body.*"

Children age 1-2 years riding rear-facing have a 532% decreased risk of injury (B. Henary, et. al. *Car safety seats for children; rear facing for best protection, Injury Prevention 2007:13:398-492)*

I saw, last week, the State Police report on the recent holiday weekend crashes and fatalities. And, the report noted 318 motorists were cited for not securing children in child safety seats. Considering the likely sample size, this is a rather startling high number. While parents would not consciously endanger their child passengers, they may not be aware of the best way to keep

them safe. Laws influence parents and increase public awareness. Oklahoma and New Jersey have both enacted laws this year to codify the rear-facing seat recommendation.

We urge Pennsylvania lawmakers to utilize Child Passenger Safety research by the AAP, NHTSA, the NTSB and others to increase motor vehicle safety for our youngest of passengers. We respectfully request that you amend HB 1551 with a two-year requirement and pass the bill.

<http://safeseats4kids.aaa.com/car-seat-guide/rear-facing-seats/>

<http://safeseats4kids.aaa.com/faqs/when/when-should-i-switch-from-a-rear-facing-to-forward-facing-car-seat/>

<http://www.safercar.gov/parents/CarSeats/Right-Car-Seat-Age-Size.htm>

<https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/aap-updates-recommendation-on-car-seats.aspx>