



PO Box 13391
Portland, Oregon 97213
Phone: (503) 890-8777
Email: emesberg@gmail.com
Website: www.ocen.org

Oregon Chapter, American College of Emergency Physicians (O.C.E.P)

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Business and Transportation

April 20, 2015

SB 495, safety belt requirements

Chair Beyer and members of the committee, my name is Katy King and I'm here today representing OCEP, the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians. OCEP is a medical society that has represented physicians specializing in emergency medicine since 1971 and its members share a commitment to improve emergency healthcare for all Oregonians.

I am here today in support of SB 495. This bill eliminates the exception to safety belt laws that allows person not to use a safety belt if all seating positions in the vehicle are occupied.

Emergency physicians see firsthand the tragic consequences of not wearing safety belts. In 2009, more than 2.3 million adult drivers and passengers were treated in emergency rooms as a result of vehicle crashes.

Here's what happens: At the moment of impact in a traffic crash, people in the car are still traveling at the original speed. When the motor vehicle rapidly comes to a stop, anyone not wearing a safety belt will continue to move at that speed until their body slams into the steering wheel, windshield, other parts of the interior or they are ejected from the vehicle.

Safety belts are effective in reducing deaths and injuries caused during impact. In a 55 mph crash, unbelted passengers of average size fly forward with a force of 3,000 pounds — enough to cause serious injury or death. Passengers in the backseat are just as vulnerable as those in the front.

Safety belts provide the greatest protection against ejection in a crash. Seventy-five percent of people ejected from cars are killed.

In summary, passage of SB 495 will help save lives and prevent injuries in traffic crashes. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'd be pleased to answer any questions.