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

Testimony before the House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Supports

February 14, 2017

HB 2643 Rear Facing Safety Seats

Chair Lively and members of the committee, my name is Hans Notenboom MD and I'm the President of the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians. OR-ACEP 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.

OR-ACEP supports HB 2643. This bill would require that children under the age of two be placed in a rear-facing car seat and is based on evidence-based studies that show this practice can reduce injuries and fatalities for these children.

Emergency physicians treat more than 30 million children each year in the ED. We have special expertise in childhood emergencies, trauma care, and in identifying life-threatening problems, including those sustained in motor vehicle crashes. Children are especially at risk for injury and death given that the physiology of the developing child is that the spines are not mature yet. Bones are not completely formed, and a child under the age of 2 has a spine that supports about 25% of body weight, compared to just 6% in adults. These kids are more susceptible to the deceleration injuries we see in car crashes.

Proper child safety seat use has been estimated to have saved over 2,100 children 4 years of age and under and reduces the risk of death by 71% for infants and 54% for children 4 years of age and under. Rear facing car seats are one of the safety practices that will help reduce the chance of serious and life altering injuries. We urge the committee to support this bill and other policies such as motorcycle helmet laws, speed limits, and distracted driving laws, that will keep Oregonians safe.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'd be pleased to answer any questions.