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## **Joint Statement Urging New York Governor Andrew Cuomo To Sign Lifesaving Seat Belt Upgrade Into Law**

*S. 4336/A. 6163 will save lives, reduce injuries and curb costs*

As organizations representing traffic safety, public health and medical professionals, emergency responders and the insurance industry, we are united in urging Governor Andrew Cuomo (D) to sign Senate Bill (S.) 4336 / Assembly Bill (A.) 6163 into law to improve the state's current seat belt requirement. Passed by the State Legislature on March 3, 2020, S. 4336/A. 6163 was sponsored by Senator David Carlucci (D) and Assemblyman Walter Mosley (D) to close a gap in New York's seat belt law. Since 1984, when New York became the Nation's first state to enact a primary enforcement seat belt law for drivers and front seat passengers, rear seat passenger safety has lagged behind. It is time for New York to join the 19 states and Washington, D.C. that have already taken this essential action to protect all occupants.

Over the last decade, lack of seat belt use by rear seat passengers has contributed to significant numbers of fatalities and injuries in New York, with 300 people killed and over 29,000 people injured. The absence of a rear seat belt requirement leaves young people particularly vulnerable because rear seat occupants ages 16-24 have the lowest rate of belt use and account for approximately half of the state's motor vehicle crash fatalities. A more comprehensive seat belt law will help protect all occupants and keep teenagers and young adults safe on the roads.

The Center for Transportation Injury Research at the University of Buffalo found that unbelted rear seat passengers pose a serious threat to the driver and other vehicle occupants, as well as themselves. Unbelted rear seat passengers are known as “back seat bullets” because they can be thrust at high rates of speed into the driver resulting in loss of control of the vehicle and into other occupants causing fatalities and serious injuries. The chance of death for a belted driver seated directly in front of an unrestrained passenger in a serious head-on crash was “2.27 times higher than if seated in front of a restrained passenger.”

According to the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), in 2018, 803 unbuckled rear seat passengers died in motor vehicle crashes nationwide. More than 400 people could have survived if they were properly restrained. A 2017 [survey](#) by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) found that nearly 40 percent of people surveyed said they sometimes do not buckle up in the rear seat because there is no law requiring it. If such a law existed, 60 percent of poll respondents said it would convince them to do so. Extending the seat belt law to include rear seat occupants will help to ensure that everyone buckles up, which will improve safety.

Seat belts have been required as standard equipment in cars for decades, but if they are not being used, they cannot save lives. Enacting a clear law to require use in the rear seat will encourage safe behavior, reducing preventable fatalities and injuries. We call upon Governor Cuomo to sign this sensible safeguard into law without further delay.

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