

**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
Monday, March 1, 2004**

SB 410, An Act Concerning Child Restraint Systems

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **SB 410, An Act Concerning Child Restraint Systems**.

CHA supports SB 410, which modifies current law on booster seat weight criteria for children. Currently, under Connecticut law, children under 4 years of age or 40 pounds must ride in a child restraint seat. SB 410 would extend current law to include children up to 6 years or 60 pounds. These modifications, though not consistent with current recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration supporting use of booster seats for children until they are 8 years of age or taller than 4 feet 9 inches, would increase the protection for Connecticut's children.

There is mounting evidence that suggests this change to the current law would protect a group of children who often are not ready for a seat belt alone. The continued use of booster seats by children over 4 years of age can reduce the risk of "lap belt syndrome," which are injuries caused by a seat belt that is designed for an adult male. Instead of protecting children, seat belts can actually cause serious injury or death. A booster seat raises a child up so that the seat belt fits properly. This prevents a child from being thrown from a car, being tossed around the vehicle or slipping under the seat belt during a collision. A misplaced seat belt can cause injury to the liver, spleen, intestines and spinal cord. There is also a greater risk for head injury. This law, if passed, would work to protect thousands of children at risk every day.

Each year in Connecticut approximately 700 children younger than six years old are injured while riding as a passenger in a motor vehicle. Motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause of accidental death in Connecticut's children younger than six. Proper booster seat and seat belt usage can ensure that these children have the best chance to avoid injury and death in a serious collision.

Thank you for your consideration.

RAF:JJR:pas