

Testimony In Support of HB 383 (Seat Belts for All)
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Good morning. My name is Susan Fetzer, I am a registered nurse, and am here today representing the New Hampshire Nurses Association in support of HB 383, seat belts for all.

My testimony will reflect the impact of this bill on the 40,000 registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and nursing assistants of New Hampshire. All nursing specialties and all areas of practice are impacted when a citizen does not wear a seatbelt.

It starts when an ambulance brings a patient into the emergency room as a result of a motor vehicle accident. The first two questions that the ER nurse will ask: Do you have any allergies? Because maintaining drug safety is an important action for nurses. The second question is: Were you wearing a seatbelt? Why? Because any emergency room nurse knows that a patient without a seat belt will require more diagnostic time, more diagnostic tests and have the potential to turn into a critical care patient at any moment. Even if the patient has a broken leg, without a seatbelt, there is likely to be a chest X-ray, abdominal X-ray, electrocardiogram, Head CAT Scan . Additional lab work and acute skills of assessment and rapid intervention

When the patient with the broken leg goes to the operating room for surgery, the first questions that the operating room nurse will ask: Do you have any allergies? And were you wearing a seatbelt? OR nurses are aware of the numerous "silent" injuries that occur during motor vehicle accidents that are suddenly revealed

when anesthesia is started or the positioning of the patient for the surgical procedure.

When the patient with the broken leg gets admitted after surgery to the orthopedic floor, the first two questions that the surgical nurse asks: Do you have any allergies? And were you wearing a seatbelt? Orthopedic nurses know that patients without seatbelts require additional pain assessment and management. They know that lacerated spleens often show up 8-12 hours later and are a life-threatening emergency needing immediate intervention.

When the patient with the broken leg is transferred to the rehabilitation unit for further recovery, the first two questions that the rehabilitation nurses asks: Do you have any allergies? And were you wearing a seatbelt? Rehab nurses know that silent head injuries are a common occurrence after motor vehicle accidents that occur without seat belts, and that head injuries can cause difficulty with memory, memory required for rehabilitation.

When the patient with the broken leg is discharged home to the care of a visiting nurse, the first two questions that the visiting nurse asks: Do you have any allergies? And were you wearing a seatbelt? For visiting nurses safety in the home is an important assessment. Individuals who do not wear seatbelts are not safety conscious and may need some important nursing interventions to make the home safe for a complete recovery.

And finally, the school nurse, caring for the child of the patient with the broken leg, who comes to the office with a stomach ache because Daddy or Mommy is in the hospital. One of the first questions the school nurse will ask is: Was your parent wearing a seat belt? The school nurses knows how impressionable your child is, and how this moment could be a teaching moment on the value and protection of seatbelts to a future driver.

These nurses, as well as the nurses here today and our Nurse Representative who is a sponsor on this bill, know that a patient not wearing a seatbelt that is involved in an accident requires more nursing care, more nursing resources, more complex planning and is at higher risk for unexpected complications. The nurses of New Hampshire urge you to support HB 383, for the health of the citizens of the state.