

The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony in Opposition to LD 157 “An Act To Amend the Laws Governing Car Seats”

Senator Diamond, Representative McLean and distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Adam Crepeau and I am a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to LD 157.

While the motive of this bill is likely to make children in Maine safer while traveling in a vehicle, it is simply impractical. The bill would require children under the age of four to remain in a car seat that is rear-facing, if the vehicle allows it. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), parents should keep their children in rear-facing seats until they reach the maximum height and weight limit for the car seat being used.¹ While this may be the age of four for some children, others could grow out of the car seat before or after they reach the age of four. A violation of this provision could result in hefty fines for parents who know their children have attained the appropriate age limit to be forward-facing.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center does not subscribe to the notion that the current laws need to be changed. In fact, the AAP suggests keeping children in rear-facing car seats for as long as possible but mentions most seats can support at least a maximum of 40 lbs when rear-facing.² The current law requires children to be secured based on the manufacturer's instructions on a child's safety seat when they are under 40 lbs. Therefore, this change is not necessary.

In addition, LD 157 would increase the age for a child to sit in the front seat of a vehicle to 13 and mandate that children four years of age or older that are under 60 pounds be in a forward-facing car seat. Currently a child between 40 and 80 lbs would be required to be in a car seat approved by the federal government. This bill deviates from the recommendations from the AAP, which is to keep children in a forward-facing seat as long as possible, not until they are 60 lbs.³ Therefore, this change is not necessary in Maine - we believe the current law should be left alone.

¹ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/rear-facing-car-seats-kids-age-new-guidelines-for-parents-children/>

² <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/142/5/e20182460.full.pdf>

³ Ibid.

Maine's current law is adequate to ensure children are safe on roadways. Thus, The Maine Heritage Policy Center urges the committee to vote, "Ought Not to Pass" on this bill. Thank you.