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Chairwoman Chowning and members of the Assembly Transportation Committee. Thank you for inviting me to speak before you today.

My name is Mary Ellen Holly, and I am the Fire Marshal for Central Lyon County Fire District, which incorporates those areas from Mound House through Silver Springs. I am also a trained injury prevention specialist. With me is Julie Leech, a resident of Silver Springs.

You have before you a newspaper article from the Reno Gazette stating that vehicle fatalities are up 340% this year in Lyon County. Last July, a man, his grandson, and the grandson's friend were killed on Highway 95A when a fast-moving vehicle driven by a drunk driver hit them. None of the three were using seat belts. 13

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SUBMITTED BY: Mary Ellen Holly

days later, a pickup truck, driven by a soccer-coach mom who was driving under the influence of marijuana and alcohol, rolled on Highway 95A. As a result, two Silver Springs girls were killed and the driver's son was critically injured. All three had been riding in the BACK of the pickup truck.

This accident prompted Ms. Leach, who knew these children from her church, to circulate a petition, asking residents to sign it if they agreed that children should not ride in the back of pickup trucks. She collected approximately 1000 signatures.

HB58 is proposed to read that "a driver shall not permit a person, with regard to a motor vehicle being operated on a paved highway, to ride upon or within any portion of the vehicle that is primarily designed or intended for carrying goods or other cargo or that is otherwise not

designed or intended for the use of passengers, including, without limitation: a) Upon the bed of a flatbed truck; or b) within the bed of a pickup truck."

Chairwoman Chowning and members of the Assembly Transportation Committee, children are not cargo.

The Bill continues to read that "a driver may permit a person to ride upon the bed of a flatbed truck or within the bed of a pickup truck if the person is a) 18 years old, or b) under 18 years of age and the motor vehicle is not being operated on a freeway or other road that has two or more lanes for traffic traveling in one direction." Chairwoman Chowning and members of the Assembly Transportation Committee, according to the NV Dept. of Transportation, there are 5,452 miles of state-maintained roadways of which 4,436 of those miles are 2-lane roadways. (including Highway 50,

which is now being called the "deadliest highway in NV.) In addition, the state inventory shows there are 20,353 miles of maintained county roads of which approximately 50% are non-paved.

The bill also reads that "the provision of subsection 1 do not apply to the portion of the bed of a truck that is covered by a camper shell or slide-in camper. "

I would like to give you some national and then state-wide statistics to show you why the wording of this bill does not go far enough to protect our children.

Stats

These statistics clearly show that there are more fatal crashes in rural areas, that trucks account for 39% of those crashes in rural areas, and that, in those trucks, safety belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60% and the risk of moderate to critical injury by 65%. More and more, children are being saved due to the use of child safety seats and safety belts.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration suggests that the essential components of a strong law would include the following:

- ❖ Child passenger safety laws should cover every child in every seating position, in every passenger vehicle.
- ❖ Require child occupants to be properly restrained

- ❖ Include all vehicles equipped with safety belts (no exemptions)
- ❖ Make the driver responsible for restraint use by all children
- ❖ Allow passengers to ride only in seating areas equipped with safety belts
- ❖ Prohibit all passengers from riding in the cargo areas of pickup trucks. When all passengers are prohibited, you increase the chances that children will not be allowed to ride there. With or without a canopy or camper, riding in the cargo area places all people at unnecessary risk for death and injury.

Publicity and enforcement must go hand in hand. Publicity campaigns should educate the public about the importance of proper child passenger protection. Enforcement campaigns should include information on

correct use, as well as publicity to raise public awareness of the law and its enforcement.

On April 16, 1997, the Secretary of Transportation issued the Presidential Initiative for Increasing Seat Belt Use Nationwide. Included in the initiative were ambitious child occupant goals. These goals aimed to reduce child occupant fatalities (0-4 years old) by 15 percent in 2000 and by 25 percent in 2005 (from a total of 656 in 1996). We met the 2000 goal a year early, reducing child fatalities by 16 percent from 1996. The Presidential Initiative identifies closing the gaps in child passenger safety laws as an important strategy in meeting these new national goals. We ask you to strongly support the rewording of Assembly Bill 58 to assure that our children will never be allowed to ride in the back of a pickup, with or without a canopy, on any



road or highway, rural or urban in the State of Nevada.

Let our state lead the way in promoting stronger laws to protect our most precious resources.

Thank you. If there are any questions, I would be happy to respond.