

Attorney General Raoul Calls On Federal Regulators To Implement Child Car Seat Safety Regulations

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CHICAGO – Attorney General Kwame Raoul today joined a coalition of 18 attorneys general in calling on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to take stronger measures to protect children while traveling in car seats.

The NHTSA is the federal agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation that regulates child car seats.

[In a letter](#) sent to NHTSA and the U.S. Department of Transportation, Raoul and the coalition ask the NHTSA to implement side-impact testing standards for child car seats as quickly as possible, after 20 years of delay that has unacceptably endangered children's safety. The attorneys general further urge the NHTSA to require that all child car seat labels include clear, concise language conveying a principle that all child car safety experts endorse: that every child remain in his or her current seat until they exceed its height or weight maximum.

“These commonsense safety measures could save the lives of thousands of children,” Raoul said. “I urge the NHTSA to issue regulations that protect children, and implement these long-overdue standards.”

Congress first called upon the NHTSA to adopt side-impact standards for child car seats in 2000. Over 20 years later, there are still no such standards. Manufacturers do conduct their own side-impact testing (and often advertise those efforts prominently), but without federal standards, consumers cannot trust this testing to keep their children safe. Few consumers realize that side-impact testing is not currently regulated by the NHTSA or any other government entity. As a result, they may misplace their trust in manufacturers' claims about side-impact testing, assuming that government regulators have imposed minimum requirements on those claims when they have not done so.

Side-impact crashes cause almost as many child injuries and deaths as frontal-impact crashes, and side-impact crashes are more likely than other types of crashes to cause serious or fatal injuries.

Raoul and the coalition also urge the NHTSA to implement labeling standards that encourage parents to delay the transition to their child's next car seat for as long as possible depending upon the height and weight limits of the product. There are currently three major categories of car seats: rear-facing seats with a five-point harness, forward-facing seats with a five-point harness, and booster seats used in conjunction with a traditional lap and shoulder seat belt. Determining which seat is appropriate for a child depends on the height and weight limits for the seat in question, as well as the child's development and maturity level. Experts universally agree that children should delay transition to the next seat in the progression for as long as possible, until they exceed their current seat's height or weight limits.

Encouraged by marketing from car seat manufacturers, parents and children may be understandably eager to move up to the next seat in the progression as soon as children meet the minimum threshold for the next seat, needlessly exposing children to heightened risk of injury in car crashes. Raoul and the coalition urge the NHTSA to

require car seat manufacturers to add clear guidance that is readily available to consumers indicating that keeping a child in their car seat until they reach the maximum height or weight limit is the recommended, safest option.

In the letter, Raoul and the coalition point out that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 13. Almost 5,000 children under the age of 15 have died in car crashes from 2015 to 2019, which equates to about 19 children each week over that time period. Since their introduction in the 1970s, child car seats have significantly reduced the risk of injury to children, and numerous technological advances have made them safer over the years.

Joining Raoul in the letter are the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin.