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October 25, 2005

Massachusetts General Court
State House
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Senator:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, health and safety groups and insurance companies working together to make America's roads safer, is writing to urge you to advance HB 229/SB 1367, legislation that would upgrade Massachusetts' seat belt law to primary enforcement. A primary seat belt law provides a budget neutral means of directly reducing health care expenditures by preventing and reducing unbelted motor vehicle crash disabling injuries, such as traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury.

Neighboring states, New York and Connecticut, as well as 20 other states and the District of Columbia already have enacted primary enforcement laws. On average, belt use in states with primary enforcement is 10-15 percentage points higher than in states with secondary enforcement laws. If Massachusetts' seat belt use rate rose by 15 percentage points, it is estimated that an additional 27 fatalities and more than 1,557 moderate to critical injuries could be prevented each year. Additionally, a primary enforcement law would save Massachusetts an estimated \$80 million in health care, taxes and insurance costs. Unbelted car crashes cost Massachusetts' taxpayers an estimated \$36 million per year for head and spinal cord injuries alone.

Furthermore, research shows that if a driver is unbuckled, 70 percent of the time children riding in that vehicle are also unbuckled. Conversely, when a driver is buckled, 94 percent of the time children riding in that vehicle are buckled. When adults do not wear their belts, they are endangering their children and sending a deadly message that it is safe to go unbelted.

The time has come for Massachusetts to pass this lifesaving legislation. Advocates urges you to **support the passage of HB 229/SB 1367.**

Sincerely,

Judith Lee Stone
President