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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG Kaul Calls on Federal Regulators to Act on Child Car Seat Safety

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Kaul today announced he joined a 18-state coalition led by Connecticut Attorney General William Tong and New York Attorney General Letitia James calling on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to take stronger measures to protect children while traveling in car seats. 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 Department of Transportation today, the coalition asks 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 coalition further urges NHTSA to require that all child car seat labels include clear, concise language conveying a principal that all child car safety experts (including NHTSA) endorse—that every child remain in his or her current seat until exceeding its height or weight maximum.

“I know first-hand that parents do everything they can to keep their kids safe. And parents count on car seats to keep their kids as safe as possible,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “We need the federal government to put stronger measures in place to protect children while they’re traveling in car seats.”

Congress first called upon 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

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regulated by NHTSA or any other government entity. As a result, they may misplace their trust in manufacturers' claims about side-impact testing, assuming 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.

The coalition of 18 states also urges NHTSA to implement labeling standards that encourage parents to delay the transition to the 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 (including NHTSA) 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. The coalition urges NHTSA to require that car seat manufacturers add clear guidance that is readily available to consumers indicating that keeping your child in his car seat until he reaches the maximum height or weight limit is the recommended, safest option.

“Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children aged 1 to 13. Almost 5,000 children under 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. NHTSA shares credit in this success, but as the data shows, there is still room for improvement. And one such area in need of improvement is making sure that parents use the most appropriate car seat given their child's weight, height, and age,” the letter states.

Joining Attorney General Tong and Attorney General James in the letter are the Attorneys General of California, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Iowa,

Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin.