

The Connecticut General Assembly



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REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTHY VAHEY APPLAUDS NEW SEATBELT AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY LAWS TAKING EFFECT TODAY

(HARTFORD, CT) – Monday, state **Representative Cristin McCarthy Vahey (D-Fairfield)** joined Governor Ned Lamont, Jennifer Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) Office of Highway Safety, and AAA to announce that beginning today, October 1, 2021, Connecticut law will now require all passengers to buckle up, regardless of where they are positioned in the vehicle.

The new occupant protection law will mandate that all passengers in the back seat buckle up. Pre-existing law only required rear-seat passengers under 16 to buckle up, even though proper restraint use is effective for all ages.

Between 2017 and 2020, there were more than 12,589 injuries of rear seat occupants in Connecticut. During this same period, there were 61 fatalities.

"The message is simple. Seatbelts save lives," **Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey** said. "This change in the law is an opportunity to remind passengers of all ages to buckle up in every position in the vehicle. Whether you are in your own car, a friend's or a ride share, a rear seatbelt can save your life and protect front seat passengers. Drivers, this is a reminder to you to be sure that all of your passengers, adults and children, are wearing their seatbelts."

"The more we can get those in a vehicle to wear their seat belts, the more lives we'll save, and that's why this law is so important," **Jennifer Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board, said.** "I know this was a multi-year effort by a large coalition of dedicated safety leaders in this wonderful state. I know it's been a long journey but I'm so glad you didn't give up because lives will be saved. All passengers in a vehicle need to be protected. All passengers need to wear their seat belt every single time they're in a vehicle."

Rep. McCarthy Vahey was a leader in passing another road-related law taking effect today, the bicycle and pedestrian safety law, or [PA 21-28](#), which clarifies the rules for pedestrians in crosswalks, allows municipalities to designate pedestrian safety zones, increases fines for distracted driving, and prohibits "dooring." Drivers must slow down or stop if a pedestrian is within the crosswalk or indicating that they are going to cross. Many believed this was already a state law, which until today was not.

Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey said, "I am thrilled that the General Assembly prioritized pedestrian safety this session. This new law provides municipalities and our state as a whole the opportunity to keep our neighbors and visitors safe as they walk and bike for recreation, travel to work, and shop. Walkable, bikeable communities are important to attracting and keeping young people, seniors, and businesses in our state."

The new seatbelt law is subject to secondary enforcement, meaning drivers can't be pulled over just because there is an unbelted adult in the back seat. However, law enforcement can issue a fine for the unbelted passenger if the driver is pulled over for a primary offense, such as speeding. The fine is \$50 if the driver is 18 or older and \$75 if the driver is under 18.

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