

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1011

September 26, 2022

Cindy Long
Administrator
Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314

Ann Carlson
Acting Administrator
National Highway Traffic
Safety Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Long and Acting Administrator Carlson,

With the recent conclusion of National Child Passenger Safety Week, I write to identify ways we can work together to save kids.

According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 1,093 children were killed in traffic crashes in 2020. More than 500 children a day are injured in car crashes. When installed correctly, car seats can lower the risk of fatal injury for infants by 71% and by 54% for toddlers. However, many parents are unable to afford a car seat and only one in five parents check to make sure their child's car seat is properly installed.

State and local governments, along with nonprofits, have responded to this challenge by implementing robust programs to provide car seats and installation training to families. The Georgia Department of Public Health has established partnerships in 143 out of 159 counties to distribute over 3,000 car seats a year. Since the program was started, 425 Georgia children who received these car seats have been involved in car accidents and survived when they otherwise may not have.

This Georgia program and others like it in states across the country depend on referrals from Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) local coordinators to reach parents in need. Working through WIC's 1,900 local agencies in 10,000 clinic sites, car seat initiatives have grown and save children's lives.

Despite the importance of child car seat distribution programs, there is little nationwide data on where they may fail to reach particular demographic and geographic communities. In its oversight of the Highway Safety Program, NHTSA should collect state level data on car seat distribution programs. I ask Acting Administrator Carlson to solicit this lifesaving data and share findings with WIC and state and local agencies to strengthen collaboration and implementation.

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Additionally, I ask that WIC study the feasibility of a pilot program to allow limited comarketing of WIC benefits and referrals to state, local and nonprofit car seat distribution programs for low-income parents. In areas selected for the pilot program, 5% or less of WIC outreach services funding could be used for such comarketing. Wider utilization of state, local, and nonprofit distribution programs will save kids' lives.

Thank you for considering these proposals. Please reach out to me should you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Ossoff", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jon Ossoff
United States Senator