



**Testimony of
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**HB 569
Motor Vehicles - Motor Scooters, Mopeds, and Off-Highway Recreational Vehicles -
Titling and Required Use of Protective Headgear**

**House Environmental Matters Committee
Maryland General Assembly
February 28, 2012**

Children's National Medical Center (Children's National) is pleased to support House Bill (HB) 569, "Motor Vehicles - Motor Scooters, Mopeds, and Off-Highway Recreational Vehicles - Titling and Required Use of Protective Headgear." Children's National commends Delegate Dana Stein for his leadership in introducing this bill, which would prohibit a person from operating or riding on a motor scooter, moped or an off-highway recreational vehicle unless the person is wearing protective headgear.

Children's National Medical Center, a 303 bed not-for-profit academic medical center, is located in Washington, DC, but serves the pediatric health care needs of the broader Washington metropolitan region. Located just three miles from the Maryland border, Children's National annually devotes nearly 60 percent of its inpatient care to children from Maryland. With five outpatient centers in Maryland and specialty care services provided in nine Maryland locations, Children's National is proud to be one of the largest providers of high quality pediatric primary, specialty and emergency care to Maryland's children and families.

Children's National is pleased to be an integral part of Maryland's world-class trauma system. Designated by the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) as one of the state's two Level I Pediatric Trauma Centers, nearly 60 percent of Children's trauma cases originate in Maryland. In fact, for the past two years, Children's National has treated more pediatric trauma cases than any other hospital in the state. In 2010, the Emergency Medicine and Trauma Center (EMTC) at Children's National provided care for more than 85,000 children. Because of the large number of visits, Children's National's EMTC can be, on any given day, one of the busiest pediatric emergency departments in the country.

Trauma is a leading cause of death in children older than 1 year in the United States, with head traumas representing 80 percent or more of the injuries. In approximately 5 percent of head trauma cases, patients die at the site of the accident. According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, there were 4,390 motor scooter-related injuries nationwide in 2000, which is a significant increase from 1,330 the previous year. 39 percent of the injuries were to children under 15 years of age.

Over the past four years, there has been an average of 155 visits by adults annually to the state's trauma centers as a result of riding an all-terrain vehicle (ATV). Of these visits, approximately 40 percent involved head injuries. Of visits involving head injuries, two-thirds of these patients were not wearing helmets. HB 569 will reduce the severity of head injuries suffered by those wearing helmets while riding ATVs.

Children are also at risk to suffer these injuries. Over the past four years, there has been an average of 65 visits by children annually to the state's trauma centers as a result of riding an ATV. Of these visits, over 40 percent involved head injuries. Of visits involving head injuries, over 60 percent of these patients were not wearing helmets.

Although a small percentage of Children's overall trauma cases, the number of emergency department visits resulting from riding motor scooters, mopeds, or ATVs has increased over the last decade. Over the last four years, Children's emergency department has treated over 60 of these injuries. While nearly all of these injuries involved a head injury, only 40 percent of the riders were known to wear a helmet.

The consequences of off-road vehicle-related head injuries can be devastating, but particularly so for children whose bodies and minds are still growing and maturing. Children involved in off-road vehicle accidents who do not wear protective head gear often suffer concussions, facial and cerebral lacerations and contusions and even worse, intracranial hemorrhages. Cerebral contusions are bruises on the brain, usually caused by a direct, strong blow to the head. Cerebral lacerations are tears in brain tissue, which often accompany visible head wounds and skull fractures. An intracranial hemorrhage, or bleeding of the brain, is a serious medical emergency because the buildup of blood within the skull can lead to increases in intracranial pressure, which can crush delicate brain tissue or limit its blood supply.

Beyond the physical and emotional devastation of these preventable injuries is the economic impact to families, governments and the health care system in general. According to recent studies, the average national annual cost of nonfatal ATV-related injuries treated in an emergency department for youths under 17 years is more than \$1.4 billion. In comparison, the cost of a National Transportation and Safety Administration approved ATV helmet can range between \$90-\$140.

The State of Maryland has taken positive steps to reduce ATV-related injuries. For example, children under age 12 are currently barred from operating ATVs on certain public lands. Children's National also commends MIEMSS for its 2007 study of ATV usage and injuries in the state.

However, there are no regulations requiring riders to wear protective headgear on these motor vehicles. A July 2011 report by the National Conference of State Legislatures found that 32

states require ATV operators to wear helmets and other forms of safety equipment. Studies examining the effectiveness of helmet laws find death rates in states without laws requiring either helmets or other protective gear are approximately two times as high as those in states with protective gear laws. Children's National Medical Center believes children and families in Maryland would benefit significantly by joining these states and enacting protective headgear requirements.

Children's National Medical Center is committed to policies that improve the health and well-being of the children we serve. In fact, it is part of Children's National's mission to improve health outcomes for children regionally, nationally and internationally. Children's National Medical Center respectfully urges the Committee to give a favorable report to HB 569. Children's National believes this is a proactive step that will reduce the severity of head injuries for those who ride motor scooters, mopeds, and ATVs.