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4. Public Comment: Please leave your comment for the Maine School Transportation Safety Commission here. All comments will be reviewed and shared with Commission members. *

With state children as young as age 3 soon to be attending school, it is essential that student transporters get introductory and ongoing training on the use of child safety restraint systems in school buses and alternative vehicles. While most older students can be protected in certain crashes by the school-bus-specific approach of compartmentalization, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration determined years ago that this occupant protection method is inadequate for children ages birth-to-K (roughly under age 5). That guidance document can be found here: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/2023-10/Guideline-Safe-Transportation-Preschool-Age-Children-School-Buses.pdf>. Even if preschool children are seated correctly at the time of a crash (far from a given), their bodies are too small to properly respond within compartmentalized seating in the intended, protective way. Instead, an occupant restraint with a five-point harness should be used by these small passengers. In a school bus, this means understanding the array of conventional and school-bus-only safety restraint types to choose from and how to install/use them. If using a passenger vehicle, like an SUV or minivan, the state's child occupant protection law guides all drivers—including those driving for a school—to the imperative to use an age-appropriate car seat or booster properly. Find NHTSA-funded training resources, including free e-learnings, at <https://www.cpsboard.org/trainings>.