



**Department of Public Safety
Bureau of Highway Safety
Child Passenger Safety**



DATE: June 21, 2019

**SUBJECT: An Act to Update to the Laws Governing Child Safety Seats
and Seat Belts - Public Law, Chapter 299**

There have been many questions about the recent passage of Maine's new car seat/seat belt law: (<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=SP0389&item=3&snum=129>).

It is important to note this law was introduced to keep children safer on Maine's roads. The most important point that needs to be stated is that *all parents/caregivers need to use their current car seat until the maximum height and weight limits allowed by the manufacturers have been reached. This point cannot be stressed enough.* Parents/caregivers need to understand that keeping a child in their current situation is always safer than "graduating" them to the next level seat.

A child should ride rear-facing until a minimum of 2 years old. If a child is heavier or taller than allowed by their rear-facing or convertible car seat manufacturer guidelines, the child may then transition to a forward-facing car seat with a 5-point harness.

The 55-pound weight limit is intended to be used as a guide. Most car seat manufacturers now make a 5-point harness system that will hold a child weighing between 55-80 pounds. This is the industry trend.

While 55 pounds was written into law, the law also states child safety seats must be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. If a child's height is over the seat's height limit, then the seat cannot be used; the child may transition to a booster seat. Most belt positioning booster seats require the child be to be a minimum of 3 or 4 years old before use without a harness, regardless of weight or height.

Booster seat laws essentially remained unchanged. The law was just clarified in this section.

*****IMPORTANT*****

Although PL, Chapter 299 was signed in to law by Governor Mills on June 14, 2019, this was not emergency legislation. The effective date for nonemergency laws passed in the First Regular Session of the 129th Maine Legislature is September 19, 2019. Until that time, individuals must follow the existing law.