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First National Passenger Safety Week A Success

Campaign to Encourage Passengers to Speak Up for Their Own Safety Gains Traction with Media, the Public Online and in Statehouses

NEW YORK, Feb. 2022 -- The first-ever National Passenger Safety Week, January 23-30 was a resounding success according to all those who participated. The campaign was launched by [We Save Lives](#) and The National Road Safety Foundation, two non-profits whose focus is on highway safety. This event is just the first in a multi-year campaign that will highlight the last week in January as National Passenger Safety Week. The goal is to encourage and empower passengers to “speak up for their safety,” when in a vehicle that is being driven unsafely.

In 2019, passengers accounted for 62 percent of the total of 36,096 traffic fatalities nationwide, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

“Many of those lives might have been saved had a passenger in the car insisted that the driver slow down, stop texting or not get behind the wheel in the first place,” said Candace Lightner, the campaign’s organizer and the founder of We Save Lives. “We are encouraged to see the campaign quickly gain traction with the media nationwide, with our partners in traffic safety and with the general public who responded to and shared posts on social media.”

The campaign’s launch began with a nationwide media blitz, with dozens of TV stations airing stories about the effort. In addition, nearly 55 traffic safety and advocacy groups joined the campaign. Key in the outreach were the Governors Highway Safety Association, which represents traffic safety offices in all 50 states, the National Safety Council and SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), which encouraged its more than 400,000 student members to talk about the campaign on social media.

Two Missouri Congressmen, Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO) and Sam Graves (R-MO), introduced a resolution to recognize National Passenger Safety Week, and Vincent Fong, a California Assemblyman, introduced a similar resolution in his state’s legislature. Lawmakers in several other states said they intend to support the campaign in the future.

Plans for the ongoing campaign include creation and distribution of materials about how to speak out, with scripts and videos giving examples of when and how to speak up. People will also be encouraged to sign the [“Courage to Intervene”](#) promise. The campaign will be



supported by public service announcements and seasonal news releases, as well as ongoing appearances on local and national media.

“Whether a driver is impaired by alcohol or drugs, is speeding or driving too aggressively, or can’t stay awake at the wheel, bad driving choices puts passengers at risk of serious injury or death,” said Lightner, who has been a leading traffic safety advocate since founding MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) in 1980 after losing her 13-year-old daughter Cari to a multiple repeat offender drunk driver. “Passengers need to speak up when they see dangerous driving behavior,” she said. “We hope this ongoing campaign will empower passengers to be safety advocates, to the point where it becomes acceptable – even expected – for passengers to speak up when confronted with an irresponsible driver.”

“Much of being a safe driver comes from education,” said Michelle Anderson, director of operations at The National Road Safety Foundation, a non-profit founded 60 years ago to promote safe driving behavior through education. “When people are knowledgeable about driving risks like impairment, speed, aggression and drowsiness, there’s a better chance they will avoid taking those risks or letting others do so. The National Passenger Safety Campaign educates and empowers passengers about how they can save lives by calling out unsafe driving in the vehicle before crashes happen.

Visit nationalpassengersafety.org for more information and to sign the Courage to Intervene promise.

We Save Lives, founded by in 2014 by Candace Lightner, who started Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), is an umbrella organization of more than 50 highway safety advocates, law enforcement agencies, companies, local, state, national and international organizations, victim’s/survivor groups, and others who want to stop the carnage on our highways.

The National Road Safety Foundation, now in its 60th year, produces free videos and teaching materials on distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driver proficiency, pedestrian safety and a host of other safety issues. It also sponsors contests to engage teens in promoting safe driving to their peers and in their communities, partnering nationally with youth advocacy groups including SADD and FCCLA and regionally with auto shows in Los Angeles, Chicago and Washington D.C.