



Testimony of
Children's National Medical Center

Before the
Maryland General Assembly's
House Environmental Matters Committee

HB 114
All-Terrain Vehicles - Protective Headgear

Presented by:
Tim Jones
Manager, State Government Affairs

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Children's National Medical Center (Children's) commends Delegate Kullen for her leadership in introducing HB 114 and is pleased to offer testimony in support of this important legislation.

Children's National Medical Center, a 283 bed not-for-profit academic medical center, has provided hope to sick children and their families throughout the Washington metropolitan region for more than 135 years. Located just three miles from the Maryland border, Children's annually devotes nearly 60% of its inpatient care to children from Maryland. With five outpatient centers in Maryland and specialty care services provided in eight Maryland locations, Children's is proud to provide high quality pediatric primary, specialty and emergency care to Maryland's children and families.

Children's is designated by the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) as one of only two Level I Pediatric Trauma Centers for the entire state. As a result, approximately half of the pediatric trauma patients in Maryland, mostly from Prince George's, Montgomery, and the Southern Maryland counties, are treated at Children's. In fact, according to the latest MIEMSS statistics, 899 children from Maryland were treated at Children's Trauma Center from June 2006 to May 2007. In addition, Iran Brown, the youngest victim of the sniper shootings in 2002, received his care at Children's.

Although a small percentage of Children's overall trauma cases, the number of emergency department visits resulting from operating or riding an all terrain vehicle (ATV) has increased over the last decade. Since the late 1980's, Children's emergency department has treated approximately 130 ATV-related

trauma cases, 40 percent of which originated in Southern Maryland. Almost 75 percent of those cases occurred in the last seven years. A significant number (approximately 33 percent) of those injuries occurred on private lands, which include homes, farms and ATV recreational parks.

Data compiled by the US Consumer Product and Safety Commission (CPSC) and reported in its 2005 annual report of ATV-related deaths nationwide indicates the number of ATV-related fatalities among children aged 16 or under has risen from a range of 54-90 per year in the 1990's to 120-155 per year in the 21st century. The report also shows an increase in ATV-related injuries for children aged 16 and under. The 2005 under-16 estimate of ATV-related injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms increased 18 percent over the 2001 estimate, which represents a statistically significant increase.

Maryland statistics on ATV-related injuries to children are consistent with national trends. According to statistics from the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC), the estimated number of children who have visited an emergency department as a result of an ATV-related injury has increased from 303 in 2003 to 390 in 2005, a nearly 29% increase in only two years. Similarly, the number of children hospitalized as a result of ATV-injuries has increased 78% from 23 in 2003 to 41 in 2005.

50 percent of the ATV-related traumas treated at Children's involve head/facial injuries, and according to information collected in the emergency department, approximately 65 percent of these victims were not wearing protective head gear. The consequences of ATV-related head injuries can be devastating, but particularly so for children whose bodies and minds are still growing and maturing. Children involved in ATV 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. However, there are no regulations requiring children to wear protective headgear on ATVs. Currently, 26 states require ATV operators to wear helmets and other forms of safety equipment. Children's National Medical Center believes children and families in Maryland would benefit significantly by joining these states and enacting protective headgear requirements.

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. In addition, studies show that children harmed in accidents involving ATVs suffer less serious injuries if they are wearing helmets.

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 mission to improve health outcomes for children regionally, nationally and internationally. As such, Children's strongly believes that HB 114 will help to reduce the severity of ATV-related injuries in children.

In conclusion, Children's National Medical Center respectfully urges the Committee to give a favorable report to HB 114. Children's believes this is a proactive step that will reduce the incidence of ATV-related head and facial injuries to children.