

## **Talking points about Maryland's Child Passenger Safety law**

### **for CPSTs and safety advocates for educating the public:**

#### **What changed in the 2022 update of Maryland's child passenger safety law?**

- To spell out what has been part of best practice advice for years: keeping young children rear-facing until age two and beyond, to better protect their head and spinal cord in a crash.
- To more closely align our law with laws in neighboring states.
- To help law enforcement as they do not want this law to be punitive, but instead they want it to educate families in order to save lives.

#### **WHY is rear-facing in a car seat important?**

- The head, neck, and spinal cord of an infant are the most vulnerable parts of their bodies.
- A young child's head is larger and heavier in proportion to their body than that of an older child. Their neck muscles are also weaker.
- Rear-facing car seats are designed to support the head and neck and distribute the forces of a crash across the entire body of an infant and a young child in a frontal crash. The car seat's high sides and 5-point harness keep the child snugly protected.



#### **WHAT does this law mean for when children can face the front of the car?**

- Children must face the rear of the vehicle in their car seat until they are AT LEAST AGE TWO, or until they reach the rear-facing weight limit of their car seat. Additionally, Federal rules require a child to weigh at least 26.5 pounds before turning forward-facing.
- All convertible car seats can be used rear-facing until 40 or 50 lbs., so very rarely would a child outgrow a convertible seat's weight or height limits before age 2. Most children could get the extra protection to their head and spinal cord from being rear-facing until age 3 or more.