The sad fact is that Massachusetts pays millions of dollars more in healthcare dollars each year simply because one quarter of us are not wearing seat belts. Massachusetts is embarrassingly near the bottom in seatbelt usage, ranking 48th out of 50 states. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tells us that nationwide, 85 percent of us are buckling up, and in many states, more than ninety percent of drivers wear seat belts—resulting in fewer fatalities and injuries, and significant healthcare cost savings.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says Massachusetts' low belt usage costs the state an estimated $170 million annually in medical, property, and lost productivity costs. If Massachusetts were to boost seat belt use to 85 percent, we would save $55 million per year in health insurance costs alone.

The national highway fatality rate is the lowest it's been in 60 years, largely due to safer cars coupled with a gradual but dramatic increase in seat belt use during those years. The CDC reported last week a decline of more than 15 percent in non-fatal vehicle crash injuries from 2001 to 2009 – a period during which seat-belt use has increased.

"A simple step that most drivers and passengers in the United States already take—buckling their seat belts—cuts in half the chance of being seriously injured or killed in a crash," said CDC Director Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH. "Yet, about one in seven adults do not wear a seat belt on every trip. If everyone in the vehicle buckled up every time, we could further reduce one of the leading causes of death."

Statistical evidence indicates that passage of a primary seat belt law in Massachusetts would boost usage to the national average of 85%. As of 2008, one in three U.S. adults lives in states with only secondary enforcement laws. Residents of these states account for 49 percent of the unbelted drivers and passengers on U.S. roads. Nineteen states do not have primary enforcement seat belt laws – including the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts can benefit greatly from a primary seat belt law. Those who claim that opting not to wear a belt harms no one but themselves are wrong. Unbelted crashes cost all of us in the form of higher insurance fees, lost productivity, and most of all, through the heavy emotional toll that these needless deaths take on family, friends, and the community.
The absolute most important thing you can do to stay safe in your car is to wear your seat belt. This is a fact. No matter what your opinion is about the law, it is simply fact.

Safe Roads Alliance supports the effort in Massachuset to pass a primary seat belt law. Those who claim that opting not to wear a belt harms no one but themselves are wrong. Unbelted crashes cost all of us in the form of higher insurance fees, lost productivity, and most of all, through the heavy emotional toll that these needless deaths take on family, friends, and the community.

If you support this effort, please "like" our Facebook page "I Support a Primary Seat Belt Law in Massachusetts ".