

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2001

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SENATE BILL 546\*

Short Title: Child Bicycle Safety Act.

(Public)

Sponsors: Senators Purcell; Forrester, Kinnaird, and Martin of Guilford.

Referred to: Judiciary I.

March 20, 2001

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE USE OF CERTAIN SAFETY EQUIPMENT BY  
CHILDREN WHILE THEY ARE BICYCLE OPERATORS OR PASSENGERS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** Chapter 20 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a  
new Part 10B to Article 3 to read:

"Part 10B. Child Bicycle Safety Act.

**"§ 20-171.6. Short title.**

This Article shall be known and may be cited as the 'Child Bicycle Safety Act'.

**"§ 20-171.7. Legislative findings and purpose.**

(a) The General Assembly finds and declares that:

(1) Disability and death of children resulting from injuries sustained in bicycling accidents are a serious threat to the public health, welfare, and safety of the people of this State, and the prevention of that disability and death is a goal of all North Carolinians.

(2) Head injuries are the leading cause of disability and death from bicycling accidents.

(3) The risk of head injury from bicycling accidents is significantly reduced for bicyclists who wear proper protective bicycle helmets; yet helmets are worn by fewer than five percent (5%) of child bicyclists nationwide.

(4) The risk of head injury or of any other injury to a small child who is a passenger on a bicycle operated by another person would be significantly reduced if any child passenger sat in a separate restraining seat.

(b) The purpose of this Article is to reduce the incidence of disability and death resulting from injuries incurred in bicycling accidents by requiring that while riding on a bicycle on the public roads, public bicycle paths, and other public rights-of-way of this

1 State, all bicycle operators and passengers under the age of 16 years wear approved  
2 protective bicycle helmets; that all bicycle passengers who weigh less than 40 pounds or  
3 are less than 40 inches in height be seated in separate restraining seats; and that no  
4 person who is unable to maintain an erect, seated position shall be a passenger in a  
5 bicycle restraining seat, and all other bicycle passengers shall be seated on saddle seats.

6 **"§ 20-171.8. Definitions.**

7 As used in this Article, the following terms have the following meanings:

- 8 (1) 'Bicycle' means a human-powered vehicle with two wheels in tandem  
9 designed to transport, by the action of pedaling, one or more persons  
10 seated on one or more saddle seats on its frame. This term also  
11 includes a human-powered vehicle, designed to transport by the action  
12 of pedaling which has more than two wheels where the vehicle is used  
13 on a public roadway, public bicycle path, or other public right-of-way,  
14 but does not include a tricycle.
- 15 (2) 'Operator' means a person who travels on a bicycle seated on a saddle  
16 seat from which that person is intended to and can pedal the bicycle.
- 17 (3) 'Other public right-of-way' means any right-of-way other than a public  
18 roadway or public bicycle path that is under the jurisdiction and  
19 control of this State or a local political subdivision of the State and is  
20 designed for use and used by vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic.
- 21 (4) 'Passenger' means a person who travels on a bicycle in any manner  
22 except as an operator.
- 23 (5) 'Protective bicycle helmet' means a piece of headgear that meets or  
24 exceeds the impact standards for protective bicycle helmets set by the  
25 American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or the Snell Memorial  
26 Foundation.
- 27 (6) 'Public bicycle path' means a right-of-way under the jurisdiction and  
28 control of this State or a local political subdivision of the State for use  
29 primarily by bicycles and pedestrians.
- 30 (7) 'Public roadway' means a right-of-way under the jurisdiction and  
31 control of this State or a local political subdivision of the State for use  
32 primarily by motor vehicles.
- 33 (8) 'Restraining seat' means a seat separate from the saddle seat of the  
34 operator of the bicycle that is fastened securely to the frame of the  
35 bicycle and is adequately equipped to restrain the passenger in such  
36 seat and protect such passenger from the moving parts of the bicycle.
- 37 (9) 'Tricycle' means a three-wheeled, human-powered vehicle designed for  
38 use as a toy by a single child under the age of six years, the seat of  
39 which is no more than two feet from ground level.

40 **"§ 20-171.9. Requirements for helmet and restraining seat use.**

41 With regard to any bicycle used on a public roadway, public bicycle path, or other  
42 public right-of-way:

- 43 (a) It shall be unlawful for any person under the age of 16 to operate or be a  
44 passenger on a bicycle unless at all times when the person is so engaged he or she wears

1 a protective bicycle helmet of good fit fastened securely upon the head with the straps  
2 of the helmet.

3 (b) It shall be unlawful for any person to be a passenger on a bicycle unless all of  
4 the following conditions are met:

5 (1) The person is able to maintain an erect, seated position on the bicycle.

6 (2) Except as provided in subdivision (3) of this subsection, the person is  
7 properly seated alone on a saddle seat (as on a tandem bicycle).

8 (3) With respect to any person who weighs less than 40 pounds, or is less  
9 than 40 inches in height, the person can be and is properly seated in  
10 and adequately secured to a restraining seat.

11 (c) It shall be unlawful for any parent or legal guardian of a person below the age  
12 of 13 to knowingly permit such person to operate or be a passenger on a bicycle in  
13 violation of subsection (a) or (b) of this section.

14 (d) No negligence or liability shall be assessed on or imputed to any party on  
15 account of a violation of subsections (a), (b), or (c) of this section.

16 **"§ 20-171.10. Civil penalties.**

17 (a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, any person violating any  
18 requirement set forth in G.S. 20-171.9 shall be held responsible for an infraction and  
19 may pay a civil fine of up to ten dollars (\$10.00), inclusive of all penalty assessments  
20 and court costs.

21 (b) In the case of a first conviction within a 12-month period of G.S. 20-171.9(a),  
22 (b), or (c), the court may waive the fine upon receipt of satisfactory proof that the  
23 person responsible for the infraction has purchased or otherwise obtained, as  
24 appropriate, a protective bicycle helmet or a restraining seat, and uses and intends to use  
25 it whenever required under G.S. 20-171.9."

26 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective October 1, 2001.