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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Changes to car seat law designed to keep kids safer *Starting today, children under four must ride in back seat*

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm signed Public Act 57 of 2009 today, making two changes to Michigan's child passenger safety law. The new requirements, effective immediately, include a rear seating requirement and removal of the nursing mother exemption.

Under the newly revised law, children younger than four must ride in a car seat in the rear seat of the vehicle if the vehicle has a back seat. If all available rear seats are occupied by children under four, then a child under four may ride in the front seat if properly restrained in a car seat. If the child is in a rear-facing car seat, they may be placed in the front seat only if the front passenger air bag is turned off and all rear seats are occupied by children under four.

The legislation also now prohibits removing a child from a car seat to nurse while the vehicle is in motion. Nursing mothers should drive the vehicle to a safe place and stop to feed the baby. With this change Michigan is now eligible for additional federal traffic safety funds.

Car seat legislation was expanded last year to require children to ride in a car seat or booster seat until they reach 8 years old or 4'9" whichever comes first.

The rear seating requirement follows research that has long found that the safest place for children is in the back seat. Children are 40 percent more likely to be injured when in the front seat compared to children seated in the rear. Properly restrained children in the rear seat have the lowest risk of injury according to the Partners for Child Passenger Safety.

Fifteen other states have similar legislation which requires children to be placed in the back seat of a vehicle.

Children who are passengers in a bus, school bus, taxi, moped or motorcycle are exempt as well as those with a medical exemption granted by the Secretary of State.

The safest place for all children 12 and under is in the back seat, and children up to age 16 must be restrained in all seating positions. Michigan law requires all drivers and front seat passengers to buckle up.

For more information about changes to Michigan's child passenger safety law visit www.michigan.gov/ohsp or www.michigansafekids.org.