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BIKING
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Flagstaff Biking Organization
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March 22, 2011

Mayor Sarah Presler and Flagstaff City Council
City Hall
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Honorable Mayor and City Council-

We are writing to express our support of the mandatory bicycle helmet law for children under 18 years of age.

Flagstaff Biking Organization has worked collaboratively with the Coconino County Safe Kids Coalition for the past six years to promote bicycle safety rodeos and a free and discounted helmet distribution program through local schools and other community organizations and events.

As part of the presentation and clinic that we do for children in the schools and at other public events throughout the year, we informally poll kids on how many own helmets and wear them when they ride their bikes. We are often astounded at how few even own helmets, let alone how few are encouraged to wear them while riding.

A mandatory helmet law for kids would at bare minimum raise awareness amongst parents and kids as to the importance of this inexpensive, simple step towards preventing serious injury and potentially death from what might otherwise be a minor accident. An enforceable law is often the best way to get kids to act in a more responsible manner than they might otherwise when outside of the oversight of their parents.

We disagree with those who insist that requiring helmets will cause parents to view cycling as too dangerous an activity for their children. Our efforts have shown that by encouraging children to ride safely and use appropriate safety equipment, we are able to generate more enthusiasm amongst the kids for cycling. Parents have many times thanked us for giving their kids more reasons to wear their helmets. Never have we been made aware of a scenario in which a parent discouraged his or her child from riding a bike because we had stressed the importance of wearing a helmet and obeying traffic

laws while riding. We are first and foremost cycling advocates and we would not support this law if we felt that its implementation might adversely affect the perception of cycling as a **safe**, attractive and fun means of transportation and recreation.

We also find fault with the argument that this law's enactment would be adding encumbrance to the legal system or that this ordinance would be an infringement on a person's civil liberties. There are numerous laws that presume that a child's well being lies ultimately with the community. For example, children are required to receive some sort of schooling and are required to travel in a child seat when in a motor vehicle. None of these laws are implemented with the intent of interceding in the deliberate intent and direction of a parent in raising his or her child. Rather, these laws are intended to protect the greater good of the community and/or the well being of the child in lieu of poor decisions on the part of an ill informed or misguided parent. We also point to the fact that this ordinance has the support of the Flagstaff Police Department in spite of any additional workload that it might create.

Flagstaff Biking Organization will continue its efforts in promoting safe bicycling and helmet use to children and adults in the greater Flagstaff area. Given appropriate funding and support, we are amenable to an increase in these efforts that might include assisting in a broader discounted or free helmet distribution program. Please keep us, and our expertise, in mind should you choose to pursue such a program.

Please consider our input as you deliberate on this matter. As Flagstaff continues to grow as a bicycle friendly community, it becomes increasingly important to act proactively in matters such as this. Bicycles are a safe and attractive means of transportation and recreation, and focusing on keeping this activity as safe as possible will help to promote bicycling in our community, thereby making Flagstaff even more livable, environmentally friendly and fun!

Thank you for your consideration-

Flagstaff Biking Organization