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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BUCKLING UP SAVES LIVES AND MONEY

Transporting your children safely

SAN ANTONIO, TX (May 21) –As the Hispanic population continues to grow, the low rate of safety belt use by Hispanics is emerging as a significant public health issue. According to the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA), motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for the age group 3 to 14 years old among Latino children.

“The reason for this alarming statistic is the non-use and misuse of child restraint systems by Hispanic families,” Rita Elizondo, national director of the National Latino Children’s Institute (NLCI) said. “This is why it is important to educate and inform Latino families, child care providers and the Spanish-speaking community about the important role that child safety seats play in saving children’s lives.”

With the “Click It or Ticket” enforcement mobilization, which runs May 21 – June 3, law enforcement officials will make sure that parents *and* children are buckled up. Many families will be fined for lack of restraining their child and fines will run from \$78 for an adult seatbelt violation to over \$300 for children. In the State of California, fines are steeper for child seat violations.

“Children have to rely completely on their parents to keep them safe from harm,” officer Matthew Pebbles of the California Highway Patrol said. “Guardians who fail to restrain their children properly have failed to protect their children leaving them vulnerable to harm or even death. It’s their moral responsibility to ensure that children under their care are safely restrained in a motor vehicle. If they fail to do so, and are stopped by police, they will experience a serious fine in hopes it will never occur again.”

Fines will vary from state to state and county to county.

Research done by NHTSA on the effectiveness of child safety seats has found them to reduce fatal injury by 71 percent for infants (less than 1 year old) and by 54 percent for toddlers (1-4 years old) in passenger cars. Currently, the national recommendation is for children to use the appropriate safety or booster seat until they can properly fit in an adult safety belt – this is usually around 4 feet 9 inches tall. The average age when a child reaches this height is eight years old. Presently, only 34 states enforce booster seat laws.

The NLCI’s *Corazón de mi Vida* program will be California, Georgia and Texas this year educating Hispanic families on the importance of buckling up their children properly. For

more information on *Corazón de mi Vida* and information on how to properly restrain your children visit www.nlci.org.

SIDEBAR

Amount of money saved by booster seat

- Every \$30 booster seat generates \$2000 in savings.
- Cost of treating a child for crash related injuries is about \$22,607 per incident.
- Insurance premiums remain low.

Major Injuries and Loss of life

- A child who is less than 4 feet 9 inches tall, using an adult safety belt, experiences major internal organ injuries when involved in a motor vehicle crash.
- NHTSA and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a child should be at least 4 feet 9 inches tall before he or she can properly fit in a vehicle's safety belt.

About NLCI

NLCI, a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to focus the nation's attention on issues and challenges facing young Latinos, accomplishes its mission by working with local and national partners to build community capacity through the development, training and implementation of culturally appropriate programs that impact young Latinos. NLCI is the only national Latino organization focusing exclusively on children. For more information on NLCI, contact their national headquarters at 210-228-9997 or visit www.nlci.org.

About *Corazón de mi Vida*

Corazón de mi Vida is a national bilingual initiative developed to inform Latino families, child care providers and the Spanish-speaking community about the important role that child safety seats and safety belts play in saving children's lives. This program promotes and introduces practices designed to increase awareness and provides education on the importance of child passenger safety, correct use of child safety seats and technical assistance to organizations that serve Hispanic families on how to safely transport their children.

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