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Center for Injury Research and Policy Applauds Passage of Youth Bicycle Helmet Ordinance in Columbus, Ohio

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) – In a move that will reduce bicycle-related injuries and deaths and promote safe bicycling for children in the city of Columbus, last night City Council passed a youth bicycle helmet ordinance that will require children to wear bicycle helmets when they ride. The Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) in The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital would like to congratulate Council Member Charleta Tavares on her visionary leadership on this initiative and to thank all of the members of Columbus City Council for making safer bicycling for children a priority.

“We recognize that bicycle safety is about more than just wearing a helmet,” said Gary Smith, MD, DrPH, director of CIRP and a faculty member of The Ohio State University College of Medicine, “but helmets are an essential part of safe bicycling. Increased bicycle helmet usage, combined with expanded education and environmental changes, such as those outlined in the recently adopted Bicentennial Bikeways Plan, will make Columbus a model city for safe bicycling.”

The ordinance will require children under the age of 18 years to wear bicycle helmets when they ride bicycles, non-motorized scooters, skateboards, roller skates, and inline skates. The ordinance will build on current bicycle education and helmet distribution programs in the city, such as Mayor Michael B. Coleman's Neighborhood Pride initiative, of which CIRP has been a proud partner since 2004.

“The Center for Injury Research and Policy is proud to have been a supporter of this legislation because we know that this type of law works. Multiple research studies have shown that education alone is not effective in achieving adequate helmet use rates, but the combination of a helmet law and education does work,” said Smith.

Based on an examination of hospital visits in Columbus, researchers at the Center for Injury Research and Policy estimate that 28 traumatic brain injuries and \$190,000 in hospital charges alone could be prevented each year in the city as a result of the ordinance.

“And these figures are likely to be very conservative,” adds Smith. “With this one vote, members of Columbus City Council will be able to save more children's lives and prevent more life-long disabilities than I could ever hope to achieve in working the rest of my career as an emergency physician in a leading children's trauma center. And for that they should be commended.”

The Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) in The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital works at the local to international levels to reduce death and disability due to injuries through research, education, advocacy and advances in clinical care. CIRP aims to improve the scientific understanding of the epidemiology, prevention, acute treatment, rehabilitation and biomechanics of injuries. CIRP educates health and other professionals, policy makers, and the public regarding the importance of injuries, injury research and injury prevention. CIRP provides leadership in the development, implementation and scientific evaluation of public policy regarding control of injuries. CIRP provides leadership and technical assistance in injury research and prevention science. Learn more about CIRP at <http://www.injurycenter.org>.