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**An Bille um Thrácht ar Bhóithre (Leasú), 2019**  
**Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2019**

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*Meabhrán Mínitheach*  
*Explanatory Memorandum*

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**AN BILLE UM THRÁCHT AR BHÓITHRE (LEASÚ), 2019  
ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL 2019**

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**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

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*Purpose of the Bill*

The Bill will make it a legal requirement for drivers to restrain their dogs in a secure fashion while the dog is travelling in a vehicle.

*Background*

In 1998, 458 people died on Irish roads, the same year, the first Road Safety Strategy was introduced. By 2012 that figure was down to 162. Ireland and the Road Safety Authority have made significant progress and hundreds of lives have been saved since. But, since 2013, road deaths have risen, and evidence suggests that while there is a strong prevailing safety culture, drink driving, non-wearing of seatbelts and distraction are still the main causes of death and injury. Unrestrained dogs in moving vehicles are a distraction as well as a potential flying missile, posing a real danger to the driver, passengers, and themselves.

In June 2011, an online study in the USA was conducted of 1,000 dog owners who had driven with their dog in the past year:

- 59% had participated in at least one distracting behaviour while driving with their dog;
- 55% admitted to petting their dog while driving;
- 21% allowed their dog to sit on their lap.

This soaring level of distraction by and engagement with a dog in the car needs to be seriously considered for future road safety legislation.

In 2012 in Italy 907 dog owners filled in a questionnaire revealing that 48% do not use any means of restraint with their dog in the car.

In 2014 RAC Pet insurance in the UK conducted a survey found that:

- 78% of dog owners travel with their dog in the car;
- 28% let their dog move freely in the vehicle;
- 21% leave their dog unsecured on car seats.

Each year thousands of pets are needlessly killed, injured, or lost in road traffic accidents, however this is not reflected in accident reports.

In the UK, 2% of dog owners have had an accident, or a near miss, as a result of a dog being loose in their car.

In March 2017, research amongst the top 8 pet veterinarians in Dublin and Meath found that an average of 5 dogs per month sustain a car injury

requiring a visit to the vet, and out of these 5 dogs, 2-3 dogs die following their injuries.

In the event of a 50mph collision a 10kg dog becomes a projectile of approximately 500kg, which can kill in a few tenths of a second the driver or passengers. Dogs can potentially jump out the window of moving vehicles, resulting in a pedestrian or cyclist being killed or injured and the oncoming car swerving, potentially crashing.

How many dog owners have driven with their dogs unrestrained on a variety of car trips, including day trips, local errands, leisure trips, the pet store, dog parks, and to work?

Legislation for restraining dogs in vehicles has to be a consideration for Ireland to maintain best-practice standards in road safety. Passenger safety measures must apply to dogs.

*Provisions of the bill*

The bill makes it an offence for a person to drive a relevant vehicle in a public place with a dog on board unless the dog is restrained, kept in an enclosed crate or cage or in an enclosed area of the vehicle other than a passenger compartment. However, members of the Garda Síochána, Defence Forces, and officers of Customs and Excise acting in the course of their duties are exempt. The legislation will not apply to guide dogs or dogs being transported to or from the herding of livestock. A person guilty of an offence shall be liable on summary conviction to a class E fine.

*Senator Frank Feighan,  
Meán Fómhair, 2019.*