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**Statement by Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., as prepared for delivery
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade
Hearing on “An Update of the Takata Recalls and Ruptures”**

June 2, 2015

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Though it has taken months, I am glad that Takata finally admitted that its airbags are defective and finally moved forward with national recalls. Getting dangerous cars off the road is crucial. Airbags are supposed to save lives, not take lives.

But these national recalls came after a full year in which we have seen a rather sloppy roll-out of recalls of these exploding airbags. Each automaker seems to have handled the recalls differently.

Some automakers conducted regional “safety improvement campaigns” in high absolute humidity areas. At the same time, others conducted “regional recalls” in the same areas. Some automakers expanded their recalls to more states. Some eventually conducted national recalls of certain cars. One automaker advised against passengers using front seats until the airbags are fixed, even offering to disable passenger airbags as a precaution.

All of this has led to considerable confusion for the public. Drivers are unsure if their cars are part of the recall. Those who have already had their airbag replaced do not know if they need to have them replaced again.

But most importantly, people do not know if their cars are safe to drive.

This is the second hearing this Subcommittee has held on the Takata airbag recalls. Our first hearing was six months ago. And yet, in that time, we are still left with many of the same questions.

We may still not know the root cause of the Takata airbag defects, we certainly know enough to take action. And while I appreciate and share the majority’s concerns about this Takata crisis, I am disappointed by its lack of action.

Auto safety is not a partisan issue. However, even after the GM ignition switch issues; the Takata airbag ruptures; and even going back to the Toyota sudden acceleration problems, this Committee has failed to take appropriate legislative action.

Earlier this year, Subcommittee Ranking Member Schakowsky and I, with a number of other members of this Subcommittee, introduced the Vehicle Safety Improvement Act of 2015. Many provisions in our bill would address problems that occurred in the Takata airbag and the GM ignition switch recalls.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) has received much of the blame in both the GM recall and this Takata recall. But it is clear that NHTSA simply does not have the resources and authorities it needs to protect drivers and passengers and to hold automakers and automobile parts suppliers accountable for safety defects. Our bill provides more resources and tools to NHTSA, increasing fines for manufacturers that violate vehicle safety laws.

Also in both cases, automakers and parts suppliers failed to timely produce critical information that may have helped NHTSA identify problems earlier. Our bill improves the Early Warning Reporting System by making more reported information public and requiring manufacturers provide significantly more information about any fatal incident involving a safety defect.

Chairman Burgess, I appreciate your interest in continuing oversight of these recalls. But we don't need any more investigation to begin our legislative work.

I hope that we can work together to move forward with our bill to keep our citizens safe on the roads.

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