

Opening Statement
Chair Jan Schakowsky
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Legislative Hearing on “Keeping Kids and Consumers Safe from Dangerous Products”
June 13, 2019

Good morning, thank you all for being here. I am humbled by chairing this subcommittee as we discuss legislative solutions that can save lives.

This is a big deal. Protecting consumers is what drew me to public life. There’s no greater privilege for us as lawmakers than when we can save lives.

Before us we have an amazing panel of witnesses, and we are considering 7 bills that aim to protect consumers and save lives.

I am the lead author of two of these bills.

This subcommittee’s Vice Chair, Tony Cardenas, introduced the Safe Sleep Act of 2019, which would ban inclined sleep products. I wrote Acting Chairwoman Buerkle in April, asking her to recall the Rock n’ Play, so I am grateful to you, my friend, for introducing this important piece of legislation. Vice Chair Cardenas and I wrote online retailers to ask them why they were still selling Rock n’ Play after the recall, and while their responses might have alleviated my concerns, later that day staff found that they were STILL selling them. We must get these products off the market and save babies’ lives.

Annie Kuster, who has waived onto this subcommittee today, and Buddy Carter, a Member of this subcommittee introduced the Nicholas and Zachary Burt Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Act. This would establish a CPSC grant program for states to install carbon monoxide detectors in childcare facilities, student housing, senior centers, and homes for low-income families or seniors.

Mike Thompson and David Joyce, who do not serve on this committee, introduced the Portable Fuel Safety Container Safety Act, which would direct CPSC to establish a mandatory standard for flame mitigation devices in portable fuel containers.

Doris Matsui and Morgan Griffith introduced the Safer Occupancy Furniture Flammability Act, which would adopt the California standard for upholstered furniture flammability.

Which brings me to the two pieces of legislation I have introduced. The first is the STURDY Act, which would direct CPSC to enact a mandatory standard to prevent furniture tip-overs.

Every hour, of every day, common pieces of furniture like clothing storage units, dressers, and chests tip, tilt, and fall. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, tip-overs inflict around 3 injuries per hour, and cause hundreds of avoidable child fatalities. Product experts and

parental groups agree: tip-over injuries are preventable, but current industry standards are not enough.

The current voluntarily tip-over standard for furniture units is inadequate and incapable of keeping up with the high frequency of tip-overs. In 2018 alone, over 2 million units of children's products faced recall, and nursery items were the leading category pulled from shelves. Similarly, CPSC rulemaking cannot move fast enough to prevent hourly tip-overs. In the last 10 years, the CPSC finalized only one mandatory safety standard. Although add-on items like wall straps attempt to reduce tip-overs, many consumers do not purchase these products or cannot use them in a manner that is sufficiently safe.

The second, introduced earlier this week with my friends and colleagues from Chicago, Bobby Rush and Robin Kelly, is the Safe Cribs Act, which would ban crib bumpers. The American Academy of Pediatrics' safe sleep recommendations call for infants to sleep on a firm, flat surface with a fitted sheet with no other bedding or soft objects. AAP does not recommend the use of crib bumpers due to risk of suffocation, entrapment, and strangulation, and has called on CPSC to ban them. CPSC, for its part, has been working on safety standards for crib bumpers since 2012, but it is not clear when, if ever, they will adopt a standard.

Families need this legislation!