

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations  
Hearing on “The GM Ignition Switch Recall: Investigation Update”  
June 18, 2014**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Ms. Barra, thank you for returning back to the committee today. Three months ago we held our first hearing on the GM ignition switch recall. We asked a lot of questions, but we got few answers. I expect things to go differently today.

We have the Valukas report in hand, and we have its words seared in our minds. Our investigation tracks with the findings of the report: a maddening and deadly breakdown over a decade plagued by missed opportunities and disconnects. Engineers didn't comprehend how their cars operated or how vehicle systems were linked together. The company believed a car that stalled while driving wasn't necessarily a safety concern. Investigators let investigations drift for years despite having proof right before their eyes that an airbag system wasn't deploying when it should have. And all of this existed in a bureaucratic culture where employees avoided taking responsibility with a nod of the head.

Ms. Barra, you have said you found this report deeply troubling. I find it deplorable, disturbing, and downright devastating – to you, to GM, to folks in Michigan who live and breathe pride in our auto industry, but most of all, to the families of the victims.

The recall announced on Monday makes it painfully clear this is not just a Cobalt problem. A new set of vehicles – including multiple Chevrolet, Cadillac, and Buick models – are facing an ignition switch recall for the very same kind of torque problem that lurked for over a decade in the Cobalt and similar small vehicles, with fatal consequences for unsuspecting drivers – including two teenagers from my own community.

Ms. Barra and Mr. Valukas, many questions today will focus on how and why this happened. I intend to focus on how we can make sure it never happens again. A culture that allowed safety problems to fester for years will be hard to change. But if GM is going to recover and regain the public's trust, it must learn from this report and break the patterns that led to this unimaginable systemic breakdown. I want specifics on whether the changes you have already put in place have made a difference.

With the Valukas report, GM has provided its assessment of what went wrong. I want to be clear today that our investigation continues. This committee has reviewed over one million pages of documents and interviewed key personnel from GM and NHTSA. While we are addressing GM's actions and response today, we will address NHTSA's part of this story in the near future. We don't yet have all the answers about what changes in our laws, the regulator's practices, or the company's culture would have prevented this safety defect from lingering so long or harming so many. But we will find out. The system failed and people died, and it could have been prevented.

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