

June 2, 2015

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and
Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20150

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Manufacturing and Trade
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Ranking Member Pallone and Ranking Member Schakowsky:

As representatives of the nation's leading consumer, public health, and safety organizations, we are writing in support of legislation you have introduced, the Vehicle Safety Improvement Act of 2015, H.R. 1181. This bill will give the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) needed authority and additional resources to better fulfill its safety mission. It addresses critical gaps in our auto safety defects and enforcement system identified in Congressional hearings and by the media and exemplified by the recall of millions of vehicles for serious safety defects. For example, 2.6 million vehicles have been recalled due to the General Motors (GM) ignition switch defect, which has resulted in at least 109 deaths and 208 injuries, and 34 million vehicles recalled due to the Takata airbag defect responsible for at least six deaths and hundreds of injuries. Inadequate government oversight as well as corporate cover-ups by automakers and auto suppliers will continue to occur again and again unless NHTSA is given appropriate financial resources and statutory authorities to effectively protect the public as provided in H.R. 1181.

This bill would, among other things: give NHTSA the power to act quickly when a vehicle defect or non-compliance poses an imminent hazard; prohibit auto dealers from selling or leasing recalled used cars that have not been repaired; improve the transparency and quality of the information submitted to the NHTSA Early Warning Reporting Database, as well as its SaferCar.gov database; increase NHTSA's enforcement power by increasing the civil penalties cap; and, provide the agency sufficient funding commensurate with its vital work. Additionally, the bill eliminates regional recalls to protect all motorists throughout the country; requires NHTSA to establish standards for cars to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities suffered by pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-occupants of cars; and, requires that purchasers of used cars are provided information about the vehicle's damage and recall repair history. We commend your leadership on these issues and look forward to working with you to enact this critically important and overdue legislation.

Revelations about the failures of GM and Takata to identify and report deadly vehicle safety defects and conduct timely recalls brought a spotlight on inadequacies with NHTSA's investigation and recall process, consumer information, corporate and agency transparency, and paltry penalties to deter intentional cover-ups. In 2007, legislation with similar provisions was introduced in the aftermath of the Toyota sudden acceleration fiasco. Eight years have now passed without these serious problems being adequately addressed. We have the solutions and they are included in this bill. We urge the leaders of the House Energy and Commerce Committee to convene a hearing on this bill and advance this legislation to prevent needless deaths and injuries, to ensure corporate responsibility and to protect the safety of our families.

NHTSA's safety mission is one of the most important throughout government. Approximately 94 percent of transportation-related fatalities and 99 percent of transportation injuries occur on our streets and highways and yet, NHTSA receives only about one percent of the overall U.S. Department of Transportation budget. Additionally, since 1960, more than 610,000 lives have been saved by laws and programs that NHTSA

carries out. It is imperative that this small agency be given sufficient funds to effectively do its job. This legislation provides the revenues and resources for NHTSA to advance its safety mission.

The tragedies caused by the GM ignition switch defect and Takata defective airbags have once again sounded the alarm on lapses in procedures for identifying and disclosing safety defects and laws to deter corporate actions that result in deaths and injuries. Now is the time to enact The Vehicle Safety Improvement Act of 2015, H.R. 1181. When commonsense and cost-effective solutions are at hand, there are no acceptable excuses for delaying any longer the adoption of lifesaving laws, consumer protections, increased penalties for corporate misbehavior, strengthening NHTSA's authority and resources, and improved vehicle safety standards that can save lives and reduce injuries.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Gillan, President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Joan Claybrook, President Emeritus,
Public Citizen and
Former NHTSA Administrator

Andrew McGuire, Executive Director
Trauma Foundation

Janette Fennell, Founder and President
KidsAndCars.org

Jack Gillis, Director of Public Affairs
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Stephen W. Hargarten, MD, MPH
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Clarence M. Ditlow, Executive Director
Center for Auto Safety

Sally Greenberg, Executive Director
National Consumers League

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Truck Safety Coalition

William Wallace, Policy Analyst
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Rosemary Shahan, President
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Jennifer Tierney, Board Member
Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways