



Letter for the Record
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Before the Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives

Hearing: Summer Driving Dangers: Exploring Ways to Protect Drivers and Their Families

May 23, 2019

Dear Chair Schakowsky, Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers, and members of the Subcommittee, Thank you for the opportunity to supplement the record of your hearing with our views on automotive safety policy. Broadly, we encourage members of the Subcommittee to focus on technologies, practices, and policies that show the most promise in reducing substantial numbers of motor vehicle injuries and fatalities.

The dozens of children who perish from heatstroke in motor vehicles every year in the United States are each tragedies. Congress, regulators, automakers, and other stakeholders should work to eliminate these fatalities. Indeed, automakers have been rapidly deploying rear seat occupant reminder technologies in the absence of a legislative or regulatory mandate in recent years.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's latest publication on children and traffic safety, 1,233 children 14 years old and younger were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2016. In contrast, for the same cohort during the same year, KidsInCars.org estimates 39 heatstroke fatalities. The rear seat occupant reminder rulemaking mandate contained in the HOT CARS Act, while well-intended, fails to address the vast majority of motor vehicle child fatalities.

Such a regulatory mandate without additional agency funding would necessarily shift National Highway Traffic Safety Administration resources from other areas. Specifically, we are concerned that mandating a rear seat occupant reminder rulemaking proceeding would negatively impact future rulemaking proceedings related to highly automated vehicles.

Removing human error and misbehavior—the primary risk factors in crash fatalities—from motor vehicle operations has the potential to save thousands, if not tens of thousands of lives every year in the U.S. To that end, we encourage members of the Subcommittee to revive bipartisan legislative efforts from the previous Congress to speed regulatory modernization at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to more rapidly bring highly automated vehicles to market.

Sincerely,

Marc Scribner
Competitive Enterprise Institute