

June 20, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

With America facing another long hot summer, the undersigned urge the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) to take immediate action to prevent deaths and serious, lifelong injuries resulting from children who may have entered or been left unattended in motor vehicles.

Since 1990, more than 1,050 children have died in hot car incidents, including eight already this year according to data collected by Kids and Car Safety. Hundreds of companion animals die in hot cars every year.

The Federal Communications Commission recently adopted new rules for the 60 GHz spectrum band that will facilitate the use of short-range radar systems which can help to prevent the deaths or injuries of children and companion animals who have unknowingly been left in or entered vehicles. It is now time for the U.S. DOT to act. Without a requirement for an effective detection and alert system in new vehicles, children and companion animals will continue to die or be injured.

As you are aware, Congress included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, Pub. L. 117-58) a mandate that new passenger motor vehicles be equipped with a system to alert the operator to check rear-designated seating positions after the vehicle engine or motor is deactivated by the operator and that the final rule be issued by November of this year. It is now incumbent upon the U.S. DOT to issue a comprehensive standard that requires that the system not only alerts the driver but also *detects* the presence of an occupant in the *entirety* of the passenger compartment. These systems already are available in the U.S. marketplace and are inexpensive. Moreover, the price will go down due to economies of scale once required, similar to rearview cameras. Anything less than this type of system will result in children and companion animals continuing to be in danger and families having a false sense of security by a substandard system.

The tragedy of a child or companion animal dying in a hot car is entirely preventable. Yet, auto manufacturers, with limited exceptions, are not putting technological solutions into cars as standard equipment. As temperatures begin to rise, U.S. DOT must not defer, delay or dilute this lifesaving rulemaking.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety
Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association (ASTNA)
American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM)
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Pediatrics California Chapter 1

American Family Insurance
American Public Health Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
Amica Mutual Insurance Company
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
CA Unintentional Injury Prevention Strategic Plan Project
California Coalition for Children's Safety and Health
Center for Injury Research and Prevention at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Kristy B. Arbogast, PhD, Co-Scientific Director and Flaura K. Winston, MD, PhD, Scientific Director and Founder
Consumer Federation of America
Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety
Emergency Nurses Association
Institute for Childhood Preparedness
Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association (JPMA)
Kids and Car Safety
Kids In Danger
National Association of EMTs
National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies
National Association of State EMS Officials
National Coalition for Safer Roads
National Consumers League
National Safety Council
National Volunteer Fire Council
Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company
Pet Partners
PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)
Public Citizen
Safe Ride News Publications
Society for the Advancement of Violence and Injury Research
Society of Trauma Nurses
Sylvia Bingham Fund
The Mark Wandall Foundation
ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation
Trauma Foundation
Vision Zero Automotive Network

The Kids and Car Safety Family Advocate Team:

Laura Beck (Midlothian, VA), mother of Anderson who died in a hot car and wife of Aaron, who took his own life after discovering he had inadvertently left their son in the car and went to work

Tyler and Pamela Cestia (New Iberia, LA), parents of Thomas who died at 2-years-old in his father's GM truck that had a simple rear-seat reminder alert, not occupant detection

Carol MacDonald (Staunton VA), grandmother of Robbie MacDonald who died at 3 years old in a hot car

Lindsey Rogers-Seitz (Morrisville, NC), mother of Benjamin who died in a hot car

Dawn and Wes Peabody (Phoenix, AZ), parents of Maya Moo who died in a hot car

Dalyce Franz (Las Vegas, NV), mother of Seth Franz who died at 4 years old in a hot car

Deona Bien (Tucson, AZ), mother of Aslyn Ryan who died in a hot car while running errands with sitter

Leanna Simmons (Florence, AL), mother of Cooper Harris who died at 22 months old in a hot car

Lisa Berry (Huntsville, AL), mother & father of Lexi Berry who died at 2 years old in a hot car

Shannon Berry (Huntsville, AL), family member of Lexi Berry who died at 2 years old in a hot car

Dr. Norman Collins, Sr. (Raleigh, NC), grandfather of Norman Collins II ("Bishop") who died at 3 months-12 days old after being accidentally left in a hot car in a church parking lot

Vibha Marks (Dallas, Texas), mother of Victoria Marks who died at 1 year old in a hot car

Stephanie Pinon (Albuquerque, NM), mother of Jahzel M. Pinon who died at 2 years old in a hot car

Israel Pinon (Albuquerque, NM), mother of Jahzel M. Pinon who died at 2 years old in a hot car

Juan Rodriguez (New City, NY), father of Luna and Phoenix who both died in a hot car at 1 year old

Kaprice Collins (Scottsdale, AZ), friend of Charly Jones who died in a hot car

Keegan Jones (Gilbert, AZ), aunt of Charly Jones who died in a hot car

Jennifer Hilton (Ritzville, WA), mother of Chris who survived being left in a hot car

Melody Costello (Medina, OH), mother of 9 month baby who died in a hot car on July 29, 2002

Todd Costello (Medina, OH), father of 9 month baby who died in a hot car on July 29, 2002

Vanessa Goolsby (Miami, FL), mother of Micayla who died in a hot car in 2016

Michael Goolsby (Miami, FL), father of Micayla who died in a hot car in 2016

Marta Magellan (Miami, FL), grandmother of Sammy Joseph Schnall, who died in a hot car at just 1 year old

James Gersing (Miami, FL), grandfather of Sammy Joseph Schnall, who died in a hot car at just 1 year old

Erin Holley (Charleston SC), mother of Finn who survived being left in a hot car at five weeks old in 2017

Robin Gigger (Saint Leonard, MD), Mawmaw of Lee who died in a hot car at 12 months old

Nicole Engler (Oregon), daughter Remi lost due to hot car tragedy at 21 months

Peter Engler (Oregon), daughter Remi lost due to hot car tragedy at 21 months

Meagan Everett (Shreveport, LA), mother of Josiah Gene Everett who died in a hot car at 1 year old

Dr Andrew Dill (Evansville, IN), father of Oliver Dill who died at 3 years old in a hot car

Jamie Dill (Evansville, IN), mother of Oliver Dill who died at 3 years old in a hot car

Susan Morgan Cooper, Director of two documentaries on the tragic issue of child heatstroke deaths. The latest one ...Fatal Distraction

Stephanie Mitchell (St. Louis, MO), mother of Tate Mitchell who died 3 days after his first birthday when left unknowingly by his mother in a hot car

Clay Blackburn (Shreveport, LA), parents of Addyson who died in a hot car at 6 months old, dad forgot her in the backseat while he was at work

Delyla Blackburn (Shreveport, LA), parents of Addyson who died in a hot car at 6 months old, dad forgot her in the backseat while he was at work

Rachel Morris (Locust Grove, GA), mother of Savannah Morris who had a near miss in 2018 after being forgotten in a vehicle at a park

Scott Jones (Gilbert, AZ), father of Charlotte who died at 3 years old in a hot car

Angela Jones (Gilbert, AZ), mother of Charlotte who died at 3 years old in a hot car

Kristin Whitaker (Tampa, FL), mother of Lawson Whitaker who died at 2 years after he was undetected in the family vehicle during routine drop off at daycare

Marissa Rodriguez (New City, NY), mother of Luna and Phoenix, 1 year old twins who passed due to being left in a hot car

Kristina Wilcoxson (Midwest City, OK), mother of James Swindle who had a "near miss" in 2008

Fletcher Ross (Hickory, NC), father of Andrew who survived being left in a hot car.

Raymond Pryer Sr. (Houston,TX), proud father of Raymond Darnell Pryer Jr. who was left in a daycare bus on 7/19/2018 for 4 hours; the temperature reached a 118 degrees; he died of a heatstroke which is preventable

Dikeisha Whitlock-Pryer (Houston,TX), proud mother of Raymond Darnell Pryer Jr. who was left in a daycare bus on 7/19/2018 for 4 hours; the temperature reached a 118 degrees; he died of a heatstroke which is preventable

Stephanie Salvilla, (Orlando, FL), mother of Gannon Werking who died July 23, 2009 at 5 months old in a hot car

Makia Wallace (Orlando, FL), mother of Jace Lucas Leslie (21 months old) died on September 11, 2020 after being left in his caregiver car

Chris and Trisha Nicolas (Bellwood, NE), parents of Weston Nicolas who died at 23 months old in a hot car

Mike Stanley (currently Alpharetta GA. death occurred in Evans, GA), father of Sydney Stanley who died at 6 years of age in a hot car

Jenny Stanley (currently Alpharetta GA. death occurred in Evans, GA), mother of Sydney Stanley who died at 6 years of age in a hot car

Jodie Edwards (Liberty Township, OH), mother of Jenna who died in a hot car at 11 months old

Dr. Dennis Sierra (Miami, FL), father of Andres who died in a hot car

Amie Duemer (Lubbock, TX), mother of Josef who died in a hot car at 12 months old in 2005

Raelyn Balfour (Earlysville, VA), mother of Bryce who died in a hot car at 9 months old in 2007

Conni Lowe (Lexington, KY), grandmother of Holly who died in a hot car

Alan Lyon (Dolgeville, NY), parent of Sophia Lea Marie who died in a hot car at 15 months old

Carla & Alan Lyon (Dolgeville, NY), parents of Sophia Lea Marie who died in a hot car at 15 months old

Miles & Carol Harrison (Purcellville, VA), parents of Chase who died in a hot car at 21 months old

Doug and Diana Grote (Moore, SC), parents of Kristen who died in a hot car at 3 years old

Henrique Aveiro and Karen Osorio (Mason, OH), parents of Sofia Victoria who died in a hot car at 15 months old in 2017

Richie Gray (Hartsville, SC), parent of Sophia Jane Goyeneche-Gray who died in a hot car at 13 months old in 2014

Samantha Cooper, friend of Miles Harrison whose sweet boy Chase died in a hot car

Bejan Rufeh, friend of Miles Harrison whose sweet boy Chase died in a hot car

Deannie Jacobsen (Sugarland, TX), parent of Luke who died in a hot car at 7 months old

Leland Jacobsen (Sugarland, TX), parent of Luke who died in a hot car at 7 months old

Amber Rollins (Olathe, KS), mother who had a near miss with her 3 month old

Carol MacDonald (Staunton VA), grandmother of Robbie MacDonald who died at 3 years old in a hot car

Yan Du and Sheng Li (San Antonio), parents of Claire who died in a hot care at 11 months old

Jessica and Justin Marson (Manteca, CA), parents of SaraCorinne who suffered debilitating injuries after being unknowingly left in a hot car

Emily Bird (Fort Lauderdale, FL), mother of Eli who died in a hot car at only 17 months old

Michele Terry (Grandview, TX), mother of Mika who died in a hot car at only 6 months old

Sue Boe (Odessa, FL), grandmother of Kate who died in a hot car at 5 months old

Cierra Harting (Saint Mary's, OH), mother of Cecilia who died in a hot car

Chanda Crutcher (Decatur, AL), mother of Kingston who survived being in a hot car

Brittany Borgess (Duboisstown, PA), step-mother of Samaria who died in a hot car at 4 years old

Beatriz Viera (Somerset, NJ), mother of Adriana who died in a hot car

Beth Brown (Chandler, AZ), mother of Amberlee who died in a hot car

Loren Sidnt (Mexico Beach, FL), mother of Joziah who died in a hot car

Haley & Rich Wesley (Angwin, CA), parents of Maddison who died in a hot car