

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 18, 2018

The Honorable John Thune  
Chairman  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation  
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation  
716 Senate Hart Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson,

We write to respectfully request that the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee hold a hearing on the recall of defective Takata air bags.

While the deaths attributable to this deadly defect continue to rise, millions of defective and highly volatile Takata air bags remain on our nation's roads, putting the driving public in danger. Recently, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) confirmed that defective Takata air bags claimed their 21<sup>st</sup> victim worldwide and 15<sup>th</sup> victim in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Just last week, NHTSA determined that 2006 Ford Rangers pose "an immediate risk to safety" and urged owners "not to drive" these vehicles because they contain high-risk defective Takata air bags.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as of the third quarter of 2017, less than half of the 46 million defective Takata air bags currently under recall have been repaired.<sup>3</sup> Further, by the end of 2018, an additional 19 to 24 million affected air bags are scheduled to be added to the recall as they reach a state of instability due to various factors, including age, geography, and inflator position.<sup>4</sup>

With such a high volume of defective air bags and such low completion rates, automakers may be unable to meet NHTSA's deadlines to complete the recalls. NHTSA has prioritized vehicles into groups based on the vehicle's risk of air bag explosion and issued deadlines for recall completion for each priority group.<sup>5</sup> Millions of occupants will be at heightened risk should these much needed repairs not be quickly completed.

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<sup>1</sup> Shepardson, David. "Ford Urges 2,900 Pickup Owners to Stop Driving After New Takata Death." *Reuters*, 11 Jan. 2018, [www.reuters.com/article/us-ford-takata/ford-urges-2900-pickup-owners-to-stop-driving-after-new-takata-death-idUSKBN1F02GN](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ford-takata/ford-urges-2900-pickup-owners-to-stop-driving-after-new-takata-death-idUSKBN1F02GN).

20th Death from Faulty Takata Air Bags Reported by Honda. 20 Dec. 2017, [www.cbsnews.com/news/20th-death-from-faulty-takata-air-bags-reported-by-honda/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/20th-death-from-faulty-takata-air-bags-reported-by-honda/).

<sup>2</sup> Shepardson, David. "Ford Urges 2,900 Pickup Owners to Stop Driving After New Takata Death." *Reuters*, 11 Jan. 2018, [www.reuters.com/article/us-ford-takata/ford-urges-2900-pickup-owners-to-stop-driving-after-new-takata-death-idUSKBN1F02GN](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ford-takata/ford-urges-2900-pickup-owners-to-stop-driving-after-new-takata-death-idUSKBN1F02GN).

<sup>3</sup> Buretta, John D. The Independent Monitor of Takata and the Coordinated Remedy Program - The State of the Takata Airbag Recalls. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2017, The Independent Monitor of Takata and the Coordinated Remedy Program - The State of the Takata Airbag Recalls, [www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/the\\_state\\_of\\_the\\_takata\\_airbag\\_recalls-report\\_of\\_the\\_independent\\_monitor\\_112217\\_v3\\_tag.pdf](http://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/the_state_of_the_takata_airbag_recalls-report_of_the_independent_monitor_112217_v3_tag.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

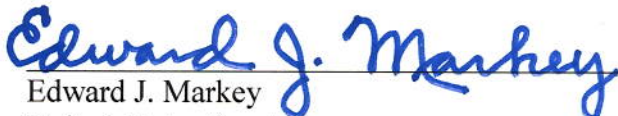
<sup>5</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. 16 Dec. 2016, Third Amendment to the Coordinated Remedy Order. [https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/final\\_public\\_-\\_third\\_amendment\\_to\\_the\\_coordinated\\_remedy\\_order\\_with\\_annex\\_a-corrected\\_12.16.16.pdf](https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/final_public_-_third_amendment_to_the_coordinated_remedy_order_with_annex_a-corrected_12.16.16.pdf)

As the Committee with jurisdiction over automobile safety, it is our obligation to explore opportunities to eliminate these deadly defects as quickly as possible and to hold accountable any entities responsible for the delay or who fail to provide adequate protections for their customers as they wait for replacement parts. It has been over two years since this Committee last held a hearing on the Takata air bag recall. Since then, there have been several additional deaths and numerous serious injuries related to defective Takata air bag ruptures. In addition, Takata recently sought bankruptcy protection, which may limit compensation for victims and funds to replace defective air bag inflators—a concerning factor for many consumers.

It is time for the Committee to reconvene on this matter and identify constructive ways to speed up the pace of the Takata recall and protect drivers who are currently at risk. Any delays in the availability of replacement parts for recalls puts the public at increasing levels of risk, as defective air bags can become more volatile over time.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Mitch McConnell, U.S. Senate Majority Leader  
The Honorable Charles E. Schumer, U.S. Senate Minority Leader