

June 8, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy,

I write to urge the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to take immediate action to prevent deaths and injuries resulting from children being trapped in hot vehicles. Every year, far too many children die when temperatures inside cars become lethally high, which can occur in mere minutes during the summer. These deaths are deeply tragic – not only because of the heartbreak they cause countless families, but also because they are fundamentally preventable.

I was proud to champion the Helping Overcome Trauma for Children Alone in the Rear Seat (HOT CARS) Act, which was enacted as Section 24222 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that passed in 2021. The provision called for a Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard intended to mitigate hot car fatalities by requiring technology in all new vehicles sold or leased in the U.S. NHTSA had a statutory deadline of November 15, 2023, to issue a related final rule.¹ Yet today – more than two years after the deadline for a final rule – NHTSA has not even issued a proposed rule.²

I expect NHTSA to immediately recommit to finalizing the rulemaking as required by law. I also urge the agency to ensure any technology proposed is sufficient in mitigating death. Currently, many new vehicles are equipped with basic back seat reminder alerts that are triggered by a rear door being opened prior to driving.³ However, NHTSA has studied these reminders and

¹ Office of Management and Budget, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Spring 2025, <https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/eAgendaViewRule?pubId=202504&RIN=2127-AM49>

² Ibid.

³ Consumer Reports, “Guide to Rear-Seat Reminder Systems,” December 23, 2021, <https://www.consumerreports.org/car-safety/guide-to-rear-seat-reminder-systems/>.

found them to be inadequate in saving lives.⁴ In fact, Kids and Car Safety has documented at least 14 pediatric hot car deaths in vehicles equipped with end-of-trip reminders.⁵

I, along with auto safety advocates, are calling for a robust safety standard to require effective technology that can detect the presence of a child unattended in a vehicle. This type of technology exists, is readily available, but is only being voluntarily included in a few makes and models on the market today. That is why the rulemaking is critically important for saving the lives of very young children.

It is simply unacceptable that NHTSA has still not issued a proposed rule, and the consequences of delaying this rulemaking are dire. Since 1990, at least 1,177 children have died in hot cars in the United States, and at least another 7,500 survived with varying degrees of injury.⁶ Over eighty-six percent of children who have died in a hot car are age three or younger. Just last week, three babies died in a matter of 24 hours in the U.S.⁷ Moreover, recent, unprecedented heat waves in early 2026 saw nearly 20,000 daily U.S. records broken, indicating a dangerous, long-term trend of rising temperatures.⁸ As temperatures across the country continue to rise and we see more and more record heat days, the dangers of leaving kids in cars are only increasing.

I urge you to direct NHTSA to act with haste and issue proposed and final rules to protect children from vehicular heatstroke deaths without further delay. Thank you for your attention to this critically important matter. I look forward to working with you further to ensure that we are doing all we can to protect children and families and eliminate these fully preventable tragedies.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate

⁴ NHTSA, "Testing Rear-Door-Logic Based Unattended Child Reminder Systems," Department of Transportation, December 2024, https://www.kidsandcars.org/document_center/download/2024-12-Testing-Rear-Door-Logic-Report_dot_79012_DS1.pdf

⁵ Kids and Car Safety Private Database, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://www.kidsandcars.org/>

⁶ "2025 Child Hot Car Deaths," Kids and Car Safety, 2025, <https://www.kidsandcars.org/2025-child-hot-car-deaths>

⁷ Kids and Car Safety, "3 babies die in hot cars in 24 hours," May 21, 2026, <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/3-babies-die-in-hot-cars-in-24-hours.html?soid=1101740449858&aid=XjZ0ec2rNwI>

⁸ The Associated press, "March Smashes Heat Records for Continental U.S.," *NBC News*, April 9, 2026, <https://www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/climate-change-kicking-butts-march-smashes-heat-records-continental-us-rcna267422>