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May 24, 2023

Ms. Ann Carlson
Acting Administrator and Chief Counsel
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Acting Administrator Carlson,

I write with serious concerns regarding the troubling trend of thefts of certain Hyundai and Kia vehicles. In Connecticut and across the country, vehicle models without theft immobilizers are being stolen, disrupting vehicle owners' lives and resulting in tragic, fatal crashes.¹ I urge the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to consider issuing a recall of affected Hyundai and Kia vehicles.

While both Hyundai and Kia unveiled a software update designed to prevent thefts of their vehicles, this patch was too little, too late. For years, Hyundai and Kia have lagged in installing theft immobilizers. Just last week, as part of a settlement with 9 million vehicle owners whose cars were stolen, Hyundai and Kia agreed to purchase theft-deterrence and theft-prevention devices for customers whose vehicles cannot handle the software update.² Yet the updated software appears to be installed on less than 10 percent of eligible vehicles, despite the companies' claims that all eligible vehicle owners have been or will be shortly notified.³ This poses a significant safety and security threat to owners as well as others on our roads. And the motor vehicle thefts continue unabated in Connecticut and around the country.

These thefts require public resources to be used to remedy Hyundai and Kia's failures. In fact, some Connecticut municipalities are using their resources to purchase driving wheel locks and distribute them to their citizens in order to protect them from thefts.⁴ Cities in other states are

¹ Per reporting, authorities have linked the thefts to at least eight fatalities. Tom Krisher, "Hyundai and Kia thefts keep rising despite security fix," *Associated Press*, May 9, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/hyundai-kia-tiktok-theft-stolen-8e0a353d24be0e7bce36e34c5e4dac51>.

² David Shepardson, "Hyundai, Kia agree to \$200 million settlement over US car thefts," *Reuters*, May 19, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/hyundai-kia-agree-200-million-settlement-over-car-thefts-lawyers-2023-05-18/>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Staff discussions with local officials, April 2023.

distributing tracking devices so an owner can locate their car in the event it is stolen.⁵ In addition, the lack of widespread adoption of Hyundai and Kia's fix burdens the law enforcement and emergency personnel that respond to vehicle owners' calls about thefts.

NHTSA's leadership is desperately needed as it is clear Hyundai and Kia's efforts are not enough to remedy the issue. Instead of burdening vehicle owners for their mistake, NHTSA should prompt Hyundai and Kia to effectively alert owners of their vehicle's security flaw and its remedy as well as inform them how to get the update installed. A recall could help ensure that vehicle owners are aware of this vulnerability and promptly fix it.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I look forward to working with you to stop the scourge of Hyundai and Kia thefts.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate

⁵ Sam Tabahriti, "Eric Adams is handing out hundreds of free Apple AirTags in a bid to cut the number of auto thefts in New York," *Insider*, May 1, 2023, <https://www.businessinsider.com/eric-adams-new-york-giving-away-apple-airtags-auto-thefts-2023-5>.