



**Consumer Federation of America**

**Statement of Jack Gillis, Consumer Federation of America  
On Senate Bill 1732 and Its Failure to Address Important Safety Concerns  
July 20, 2015**

Washington, DC -- I am Jack Gillis, auto safety advocate at the Consumer Federation of America and author of *The Car Book*, published in cooperation with the Center for Auto Safety. CFA is an association of nearly 300 state local and nation consumer and public interest organizations. Since being established in 1968, CFA has worked with the Senate Commerce Committee to develop bipartisan solutions to many of our nation's most significant problems and challenges facing consumer health and safety. Because this committee's longstanding tradition of bipartisanship, especially on safety, we were shocked and disappointed with the bill that was advanced out of Committee last week. It is incomprehensible that such a bill would surface when nearly every day for the past 18 months the press has been reporting hidden problems with safety equipment in our cars; when every week there are millions of cars being recalled for serious defects that kill and injure; and, when every month there is a another congressional hearing that reveals misbehavior by automakers and missteps by NHTSA in acting on defects. And, every time this happens, there are key lawmakers who lack the political courage to stand up and adopt measures to improve the system and protect consumers.

In 2014, there was a record number of recalls for vehicle safety defects. At least 60 million vehicles were recalled for problems including the General Motors ignition switch defect and exploding Takata airbags. The GM death toll has grown from 13 deaths to at least 124. Exploding Takata airbags have killed 6 people or more. The American public is waiting for the leadership in Congress to address these problems and act.

Unfortunately, at last week's mark-up of safety legislation the leadership of the Senate Commerce Committee crashed at every turn on the road to addressing the tragic impact that vehicles have on America's public health. The Republican leadership failed to hold auto industry executives accountable for their decisions that caused deaths and injuries. They failed to give National Highway Traffic Safety Administration the essential legal and financial tools it needs to fulfill the agency's mission of protecting the public. And, they failed the American public by putting auto and trucking industry profits ahead of public safety.

While we applaud the inclusion of Senator McCaskill's amendment prohibiting rental cars from leaving the lot unless they have been repaired, they failed to provide the same protection to consumers purchasing used cars by not adopting Sen. Blumenthal's amendment to protect used car buyers. This is an appalling disregard for the safety of tens of millions of consumers who can only afford, or choose to buy, used cars. Nearly, three out of four car buyers are buying a used, versus a new car, and buying a second hand car should not mean that these consumers and their families should be subject to second rate safety protections. The Senate needs to close this safety loophole.

Access to fundamental vehicle safety information is an important right. Ironically, it is also fundamental to the fully functioning free marketplace that Republican's traditionally support. Nevertheless, when Senators Markey and Blumenthal offered an amendment that would give consumers better and earlier access to critical information about safety, it was defeated.

The Consumer Federation of America appreciates the work and commitment of Senator Markey and Senator Blumenthal. CFA stands with you in making sure that a safety bill advances safety and not the agenda of industry.