



September 8, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

Tragically, over 1,000 children in our country have died in hot cars since 1990 and hundreds of pets die in hot cars every year as well. **We urgently need your support to ensure that the House-passed version of the Hot Cars provision in the Infrastructure bill prevails over the ineffective Senate version.** This will be the difference between actually stopping hot car deaths of children and pets... or not.

As a new father, we know that this issue must have crossed your mind. Maybe you have heard about the 20-month-old South Carolina twins that were discovered dead inside the family car on September 1st when their loving parent went to pick them up at childcare at the end of the day. It was only then they discovered the boys had never been dropped off. Or you might be familiar with the Evansville, IN July 2019 incident when the father, a professor, also thought he had dropped off his little boy at childcare. These heatstroke deaths are happening to really wonderful, caring, and loving parents.

On behalf of families whose children have died in hot cars and the ones who *will* lose their children if we don't get this provision right, we plead with you for your leadership on this important child safety issue.

The two versions of the Hot Car provisions differ drastically calling for two different types of technology...

The Senate version calls for a system that appeases the auto industry, yet provides very little protection for children. This language calls for a simple reminder to check the back seat, which would not protect the 26% of children who die in hot cars after getting in on their own. It can also be easily missed by a parent who thought their child was not with them and only applies to the backseat. This type of system would provide far too many false alarms because it doesn't detect a child in the car, it simply assumes there's a child in the back seat because a back door was opened.

The House version is comprehensive and would protect children from all types of hot car situations. It calls for occupant **detection** and **alert systems** that can actually detect the presence of a living, breathing being inside a car. It would address all types of hot car situations throughout the entire passenger cabin. Check out this recent Good Morning America segment we did with Gio Benitez that shows the technology in action in the new Genesis.

<https://www.kidsandcars.org/2021/09/01/new-technology-aims-to-prevent-child-hot-car-deaths/>

Our organization has been working on this issue for 25 years. We NEED a comprehensive technological solution or children will continue to die and they simply do not have to. The technology exists, it is cost effective at under \$20 per vehicle and should be included in every vehicle as standard equipment.

See this video with examples of a few systems available right now:

<https://youtu.be/z5eWarukWQs>

There are over 60 leading national child safety, injury prevention, consumer advocacy and pet welfare organizations in support of the House language.

<https://www.kidsandcars.org/hot-cars-act-supporters/>

Can we count on you to help ensure that occupant detection, like what is called for in the House-passed infrastructure bill, will prevail in the final bill sent to President Biden?

Sincerely,

The Kids and Car Safety Team

P.S. For more information and background on this topic, please visit...

<https://www.kidsandcars.org/hot-cars-act-of-2019/>

Cierra & Brian Harting (Saint Mary's, OH)

Parents of Cici who died in a hot car just over 1 month ago after a miscommunication between us about who got her out of the car.

Dr. Andrew & Jamie Dill (Evansville, IN)

Parents of Oliver "Ollie" Dill, 3, who died in a hot car on July 9, 2019 – two years ago today. Dr. Dill tragically missed daycare drop off and went to work where he is a professor at University of Southern Indiana.

Lindsey Rogers-Seitz and Kyle Seitz (Morrisville, NC)

Parents of Benjamin Seitz who died in a hot car when he was 15-months-old after his loving, devoted father missed the turn to daycare and unknowingly left him in his rear-facing car seat while he was at work all day. This week marked the 7-year anniversary of Benjamin's death.

Jodie Edwards, PhD (Liberty Township, OH)

Dr. Edwards unknowingly left her 11-month-old daughter, Jenna, in a hot car in 2008. They had recently changed their daycare drop off routine from one drop off to two different drop offs.

Scott & Angela Jones (Gilbert, AZ)

We are the parents of 3-year-old Charly, who died in a hot car in 2019 after her loving father unknowingly left her in his car while he worked. She was only 20 feet away from him in our driveway, while he worked from home and had no idea she hadn't been dropped off at daycare.

Mike and Jenny Stanley (Evans, GA)

Parents of Sydney who died at the age of 6 in a hot car in 2010 after entering the family car on her own. Sydney died in a GM vehicle that would have had occupant detection technology if GM had followed through with their promise to add it to their vehicles by 2004. It's 2021 and they still haven't done it. We NEED a safety standard for this technology.

Juan & Marissa Rodriguez (New City, NY)

Juan and Marissa are the parents of twin babies: Luna and Phoenix who died at only 1-year-old in a hot car in 2019 after their loving father unknowingly left them in his car all day while he worked. Juan is a U.S. combat veteran and currently serves in the New York Army National Guard.

Zhong & Perla Li (Pomona, CA)

Parents of Kiara who died at 3 ½ years old in a hot car in 2015. Tragically, this occurred after the family had a busy morning celebrating Father's Day and was the result of a miscommunication about who got her out of the car.

Vanessa & Michael Goolsby (Hialeah, FL)

Parents of Micayla Goolsby who died at 11-months-old in a hot car in 2016 after her loving father unknowingly left her in the car.

Lisa & Shannon Berry (Huntsville, AL)

Parents of Lexi who died at 2-years-old in August, 2018. After a change in their daycare drop-off routine, Lexi's loving father unknowingly left Lexi in his car all day while he worked. Despite their safety plan of putting the diaper bag in the front seat every day, Lexi was still left behind as the diaper bag was placed in the back seat for the first and only time that day.

Nicole Engler, RN & Pete Engler (Roseburg, OR)

Parents of Remi who died in a hot car. Remi's father normally took Remi to daycare, but on the day she died her mother decided to take her. She had been sick and nobody had been sleeping well. Nicole missed the daycare drop-off and discovered Remi still in her car at the end of her work day.

Marta Magellan and James Gersing, Miami, Florida

We are the grandparents of one-year-old Sammy Joseph Schnall, who died in a hot car when his grandmother thought her husband was getting the baby out, while he thought she had brought him into his room to nap. A tragedy like this can be avoided by providing easy technology to alert the driver of a child or pet left in a car.

Dr. Norman L. Collins, Sr. (Raleigh, NC)

Norman Collins II (Jackson, MS)

Family of Norman Collins III, affectionately known as Bishop, who died in a hot car. His death was the result of a miscommunication between his father and a fellow church member about who was getting 3-month-old Bishop out of the car and into church.

Sue Boe Shea - (Land O Lakes, FL)

Grandmother of 5-month-old Kate Lola Boe who died in the back seat of an overheated vehicle on June 28, 2006. No charges were filed. This was neither a case of abuse nor negligence, but tragically happened as a result of unusual circumstances.

Sam & Raychele Jackson (Roanoke, VA)

Devoted and loving parents of River who died 4 months shy of her 3rd birthday after she quietly snuck out of the house and went outside to explore during her nap time. She was found dead inside the family van as River was able to easily get herself in, but she was unable to get herself out.

Loren E. Sindt (Panama City, FL)

Mother of Joziah who died at only 16-months-old in a hot car. Loren had buckled him into his father's car before they drove to their uncle's home where he was unknowingly left behind by his father. Loren discovered Joziah still in the car when she arrived a short time later.

Todd & Melody Costello (Medina, OH)

Parents of Tyler who died at 9-months-old in a hot car. Todd didn't normally take Tyler to daycare and was out of his normal routine when he missed daycare drop-off and went to work all day in July, 2002.

Amie Duemer (Lubbock, TX)

I am the loving mother of Josef who died at only 1-year-old in a hot car in 2005. I unknowingly left him in my car all day while at work.

Brittany Borgess (Williamsport, PA)

Step-mother of Samaria Motyka, 4, who died inside my car after I unknowingly left her there. I dropped off two of our other children at their daycare facilities and missed the third drop off. I didn't know she never made it to daycare until I found her in my car after work. She got out of her car seat, but wasn't able to get out of the car.

Megan & Campbell Aurelius (League City, TX)

Megan is the mother of sweet Lily Kate Guerra who died at only 5-months-old in a hot car in 2013 when her father left her in his personal truck all day while he worked.

Delyla & Clay Blackburn (Shreveport, LA)

Parents of 6-month-old Addyson who died after her father's routine was disrupted with a dentist appointment. Clay was supposed to take Addyson from her mother's work to daycare, but he missed the daycare stop and went to work all day. After work, he went into the daycare to pick her up only to realize that she had never been dropped off.

Stephanie Pinon (Albuquerque, NM)

Mother of Jahzel Pinon, 2, who died in her mother's van. Jahzel's father strapped her into her car seat behind the driver's seat before an appointment. Her mother thought she was at home with her father and unknowingly left her in her van for several hours.

Stephanie Salvilla (Orlando, FL)

Mother of Gannon Werking who died on his 5th month birthday in a hot car in 2009 after his loving mother unknowingly left him in her car all day while she worked. Stephanie had a safety routine of placing the bottles in her front seat as a reminder, but on that day the bottles weren't in the front seat.

Eric & Michelle Stuyvesant (Garland, TX)

Parents of Michael Stuyvesant, who suffered multiple strokes and brain injury after being unknowingly left in his father's car for an extended period of time on June 10, 2015. A change in a daily routine nearly cost Michael his life.

Reginald and Julia McKinnon (Cape Coral, FL)

We are the parents of Payton Lyn who died at only 17-months-old in a hot car in 2010 after her loving father unknowingly left her in his vehicle all day while he worked.

Robin Hammett Gigger (Saint Leonard, Md)

Robin is the Mamaw of Lee who died at only 1 year-23 days old after his loving foster mother unknowingly left him in the car all day while she was working. Our hearts are forever broken.

Kyle & Beth Brown (Chandler, AZ)

Parents of Amberlee who died only 3-months-old after her loving, attentive father unknowingly left her in his car.

Raymond & Dikeisha Pryer (Houston, TX)

Raymond and Dikeisha are the parents of Raymond, Jr. who died at only 3-years-old in 2018 after being left in a hot daycare van after returning from a field trip to the local park on one of the hottest days in July that year.

Donna Counts (Tupelo, MS)

I am the mother of Daniel Hamrick who died at only 8-months-old in a hot car in 2003 after his father dropped the oldest child off at daycare and unknowingly left Daniel in the car all day.

Delores Estis (Longview, TX)

I am the mother of Christian LaCombe who died in a hot car after his wonderful grandmother unknowingly left him in her car.

Tania San Miguel-Bounds (Ollala, WA)

Tania is the parent of Miah Isabel who died at only 20 months-old in a hot car in 1999 after I unknowingly left her in my car. I thought she was in daycare. Miah was in my car for one hour in the Texas heat before I realized she hadn't been dropped off.

Dalyce Franz (Las Vegas, NV)

Mother of Seth Franz, 4, who was inadvertently forgotten in a car during August of 2015 after going out for the day with family.

Maria-Theresia and Brian Pio (Phoenix, AZ)

Drake Pio was left unknowingly by his loving mother in a hot car at 14 months old in 2014. By the grace of god, he survived however the entire family of 6 were severely traumatized by this preventable accident.

Jessica & Justin Marson (Manteca, CA)

We are the parents of SaraCorinne Marson who survived being left in a hot car but suffered severe brain damage. SaraCorinne requires around the clock care due to her debilitating injuries.

Michele & Mikey Terry (Maypearl, TX)

Parents of Mika Terry who was tragically forgotten in a hot car by her loving father who was out of his routine and became distracted by a phone call in 2005.

Jody Newcomb (Henderson, NV)

Mother of Michael, 5, who was playing an innocent game of hide and seek and chose my car as his hiding place. Unfortunately, after four days on life-support we had to make that horrible choice but no parent should ever make.

Joy Green (Baton Rouge, LA)

Mother of Angel Green who was left in a hot van at daycare and died.

Erin Johnson (Salisbury, NC)

My beautiful daughter Bridget died at only 2-years-old after being inadvertently left in her car seat inside my car. Her father had taken her to daycare the previous two days and I went to work thinking she was safely at her daycare facility.

Kristin Whitaker

In 2016, Kristin's son Lawson - just 22 months old - passed away in a vehicle after his loving father dropped his older sister off at kindergarten (a new routine) and then believed he had dropped him off at daycare. He studied all day for a first responder exam believing Lawson was at his daycare being taken care of. More than 40 children passed away that year in similar circumstances.

Deona Bien, Tucson, AZ

Mother of Aslyn Ryan, age 1, inadvertently left in a hot car by her sitter in Honolulu HI, 2004.

Yan Du & Sheng Li (San Antonio, TX)

Yan and Sheng are the parents of Claire who died at only 11-months-old in a hot car in 2017 after her loving father unknowingly left her in his car all day while he worked.

Billy Taylor (Jesup, GA)

Billy is the grandfather of Jaxon who died at 11 months old in September of 2015 after his other grandparents forgot to get him out of the car when they returned home from church.

Conni Lowe (Lexington, KY)

I am the grandmother of Holland "Holly" Gaines Judy, 5 months, who died after she was left in her mother's car in the driveway after her mother went to pay a bill. She was in the car for over an hour when her mother realized the baby was with her, but it was too late.

Stephanie & Corey Mitchell (St. Louis, MO)

Stephanie and Corey are the parents of Tate who died 3 days after his first birthday in a hot car in 2017 after his loving mother unknowingly left him in her car all day while she worked.

Rachel Morris (Locust Grove, GA)

Mother of 6-month-old Savannah who she unknowingly left in her car while taking her 5 girls to the park to play after church. Thankfully, Savannah suffered no injuries, but her mother will never forget that day and what could have been.

Karey Ann Dawidowicz (Denton, MD)

Exhausted, nursing who went into the grocery store forgetting her 3-month-old child was in the rear-facing car seat in the back seat. It hit me like a ton of bricks and I ran out of the store and ran to my car. She was OK but the fact remains that it can happen to anybody, even loving caring parents. It happened to me.

Emily Hossann (Sparrowbush, NY)

Mother of Logan Hossann who was accidentally left behind in the car for 40 mins. Thankfully no tragic injuries occurred but it could have easily ended up with a much different ending.

Kristina Wilcoxson (Norman, OK)

Mother of a now 13-year-old who survived when he was unknowingly left in her car as a baby.

Erin Holley (Charleston, SC)

Erin and her husband unknowingly left their 5-week-old son Finn in a parked car, thinking he was with them and their daughter on a trip to the park. Finn survived, but the family has since known two infants who were accidentally left and died in hot cars in SC in separate incidents.

Ashley Phillips (Kaufman, TX)

Mother of Charleigh who I unknowingly left in my car when she was 3-months-old. I am so grateful that my daughter survived because so many do not.

Allison Werner (Shiner, TX)

I inadvertently left my 2-year-old in my car for 30 minutes in July while visiting family in Ocean Springs, MS.

Dawn & Wes Peabody (Phoenix, AZ)

We are the parents of Maya Peabody who died after her father inadvertently left her in the car during a change in routine.

Raelyn Balfour (Earlysville, VA)

I am the mother of Bryce Balfour who was 9-months-old when I unknowingly left him in my vehicle and went to work. I received an emergent phone call from work on my way to drop him off at daycare and lost awareness that he was with me. I made a promise to my son that day that I would do everything in my power to make sure this never happens to another child.

Carol & Miles Harrison (Purcellville, VA)

We lost our son Chase when he was only 21-months-old after he was unknowingly left in my (his father) car during a change in routine. I discovered him when a co-worker came into my office to ask if I had a doll in my car. I cry every day for Chase and will work every day to make sure no family has to endure this trauma.

Alan & Carla Lyon (Dolgeville, NY)

Our beautiful daughter Sophia Lea Marie died when she was 15-months-old inside my car. I had dropped off our older children at two different locations and thought I had dropped Sophia off at her childcare location. I returned home, got ready for work and left in a different car, not realizing she was still in the other vehicle.

UNANSWERED