

**STATEMENT OF JOAN CLAYBROOK,
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ADMINISTRATION & PRESIDENT EMERITUS, PUBLIC CITIZEN**

This morning, I am here to discuss the failure of Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg and the safety agency, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), for missing the statutory deadline for issuing the Hot Cars standard as well as other timelines to establish this critical and essential safety regulation.

Climate experts and media stories are predicting that the summer of 2024 could be a repeat of the summer of 2023, which was the hottest on record in more than 2,000 years for the Northern Hemisphere. We expect that as temperatures climb so will the death and injury toll of innocent children inadvertently left inside of cars.

These deaths are appalling and so is the apathy of the DOT. They have known about this problem for over 20 years. It took safety organizations and parents going to Congress to pass legislation directing regulatory action with a specific deadline of November 2023 for issuing a final rule. This was not an easy achievement. Despite the one year notice of a statutory deadline the agency has missed it as well as other deadlines they set themselves for completing the hot car safety standard.

We have affordable and available technology at hand to both detect the presence of a child and alert the driver. Nearly 5 years ago, the auto industry, with great fanfare, announced industry agreement on a “voluntary standard” to provide protection for children left in hot cars. But voluntary industry agreements are inadequate, ineffective, and unenforceable.

A federal safety standard will guarantee that whatever technology is used by the auto industry will meet minimum safety performance requirements. This will ensure that every child in every vehicle on every car trip will be protected by the best technology to prevent death and injury from heatstroke.

This is what government vehicle safety standards achieve. We know that federal safety standards work automatically to save lives, stop injuries, minimize the cost to consumers and prevent heartbreak to families. As a former NHTSA regulator and consumer advocate I know firsthand the lifesaving and cost-saving benefits of federal motor vehicle safety standards. Requiring safety technology like airbags, rollover prevention, rearview cameras and recently, automatic emergency braking saves tens of thousands of lives and billions of dollars.

It is past time for DOT to issue a standard requiring inexpensive technology that detects the presence of a child and alerts those outside of the vehicle. No more delays, no more excuses, and no more senseless and preventable deaths of children.

As we feel the heat this summer, it's time DOT feels the heat to get this standard issued.