

**Testimony of Kate Carr, President and CEO, of Safe Kids Worldwide,
Consumer Product Safety Commission
Agenda and Priorities FY 2014
June 20, 2012**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity and time to testify before this hearing to comment on the view of Safe Kids Worldwide about the budget priorities for the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

I speak for a special class of consumers. They are people who sleep in cribs, who play with toy trucks and who should be wearing safe bicycle helmets. They play sports with abandon and jump for joy at the sight of a swimming pool on a hot day like this one. Kids are depending on the CPSC for its due diligence as a watchdog, educator and tester.

First, while Safe Kids and CPSC are well acquainted, let me state for the record the role of the organization with which I work.

Safe Kids is a global network of organizations dedicated to providing parents and caregivers with practical and proven resources to protect kids from unintentional injuries, the number one cause of death to children in the United States. Throughout the world, almost a million children die of an injury each year, and every one of these tragedies is preventable. Through research, education and advocacy, Safe Kids works with an extensive network of more than 600 coalitions and chapters in the U.S. to reduce traffic injuries, falls, burns, poisonings, drownings, defective products and more. Since 1988, Safe Kids has helped reduce the U.S. childhood death rate from unintentional injury by 53 percent.

We have Safe Kids partner organizations operating in 23 countries on six continents around the world. With them, we share information and best practices on ways to prevent injuries in children. And, I want to emphasize the word “share,” because while the United States is the richest nation on the globe, it is not best in class when it comes to preventable injuries in children. We learn best practices from other nations just as we export them to other nations.

There is a debate in this nation about the role of government. Is government too expansive? Or is it backing away from critical priorities beyond the reach of people acting alone? Just as an individual cannot put out a fire or solve crime, just as we, alone, cannot protect our nation from terrorist threats or make the air cleaner, there are other functions we cannot perform alone. At the very least, there should be a consensus that the most vulnerable people in our society—children, senior citizens and wounded warriors among others--and they children should be able to count on government—and organizations like Safe Kids—to make their lives safer.

I am so pleased to join you today because I believe the Consumer Product Safety Commission plays this role, a role that cannot be fulfilled by ourselves acting alone. And it does so very effectively.

- How can a parent or caregiver inspect a toy to determine if it is made with poisonous lead?

- When a defective product hits the marketplace, how can a parent know about the danger without a central clearinghouse?
- A single consumer lacks the voice and volume to encourage a company to take a product off its shelves voluntarily, as the CPSC does with its recall capacity.

Thus, even in a tough economy and the challenges we have involving the federal deficit, I believe that the President and the Congress must provide budget levels for the CPSC so it can truly meet its mandate and mission. I will provide you with Safe Kids' thoughts on the specific areas within CPSC's mission that are important in preventing injury in children.

Information Gathering; Trend Detection

I wanted to use this opportunity to talk about the future, more specifically, anticipating the future. Chairman Tenenbaum, you may recall that we recently joined together in a statement about the dangers of small magnets made for adult anti-stress toys. Children eat them, either out of curiosity or, when kids are older, to mimic tongue piercings. When a child swallows more than one, the magnets can become very dangerous. The agency responded about one case in March in which a 3-year-old swallowed 37 magnets. In an x-ray it looked like a bracelet, but it wasn't. The magnets tore three holes in her lower intestine. The agency had warned about the magnets before.

In April, we heard from our coalition in New Orleans, based at the Children's Hospital in New Orleans about a two-year-old named Braylon Jordan who endured eight surgeries because eight magnets he swallowed were clamping shut the trail of his intestines. One of Braylon's doctors conducted an informal survey and found that 33 pediatric gastroenterologists have seen 80 cases in which children swallowed magnets.

What is important about this story is the need to share information about dangerous trends impacting all of us, but especially children. I am advocating for an intelligence gathering capacity about emerging health hazards and dangerous products; if you will, this would be a CIA for consumers. In fact, the CPSC has such a capacity. A key component is its National Electronic Injury Surveillance System ("NEISS"), a national probability sample of hospitals in the U.S. and its territories. Using NEISS, injury data from hospital emergency rooms is collected and analyzed to identify patterns of occurrence and risk groups for specific injuries. This valuable information forms the basis for preventive measures and educational programs.

The Agency must continue this important function, and Congress must provide the necessary funding for it. Safe Kids applauds the evolution of NEISS throughout the years, such as increasing the number of hospitals used in the sample and the expansion of the system to capture data on all injuries, including those not associated with consumer products. We hope that the CPSC works in the future to improve this useful data collection tool. In addition, the CPSC's safety hotline is also a vital part of this information gathering process.

Finally, the news media cannot be undervalued as a partner in exposing consumer dangers and trends. Safe Kids has been engaged in a program with the goal of maintaining sports as a vital and enjoyable part of school and childhood, but also safe. The danger posed by serious hits in football has received a great deal of attention

recently. We have been emphasizing the importance of paying attention to the range of serious injury sustained in sports, sports beyond football, and injuries and sports involving girls as well as boys. NBC's "Rock Center" recently ran a well-documented story about concussions experienced by girls in soccer; and it followed up with another story about a headband being sold which purports to reduce concussions, but the efficacy of this product is questionable. Safe Kids alerted the agency about the product, and we were glad to say that the federal government is on the job. As it has for years, Safe Kids commits to being a part of this information gathering network, including our 600 coalitions around the nation.

Recalls

One of the most important functions the agency plays in protecting children is in detecting products which are dangerous. Products parents use to care and clothe their children are among the top of many of your recalls. Today, most of your recalls carry the phrase "in cooperation with the firm. . ." and it is admirable that corporations are performing as good corporate citizens. But without the oversight role of the government—including the other agencies engaged in recalls—there is a danger that more defective products will enter the stream of commerce. This must remain an agency priority.

As a parent and consumer, I feel much more confident about the agency's testing capacity with the opening of the new lab in Rockville. It must be a budget priority that the lab be able to keep up with the next, new thing in testing technology to stay ahead of the curve. In addition, the agency must be able to attract the best and brightest engineers so there is a parity of expertise with the manufacturers of the products you are testing.

Water Safety

Since we meet in the middle of summer, it is appropriate to emphasize the importance of the educational role the agency plays in keeping kids safe in swimming pools. This is critical because, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drowning is the leading cause of death for children 1 to 4, and the second leading cause for children 5-9. Safe Kids has been fortunate to work with you on this program.

This year is special, because the CPSC has focused its campaign on minority communities. This is wise, and long in coming. African American and Hispanic children under 5 drown at higher rates than white children. Further, according to USA Swimming, 70 percent of African American children and 62% of Hispanic children do not know how to swim.

This speaks to a larger question, which is the importance of the federal government's role as a public educator. Your voice is loud, articulate and often passionate about public safety. We hope that your budget request for FY 2014 recognizes the importance of your educational role. The public educator role is a ready target for budget cutters, but that is wrong.

We believe that passage of the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act will have a significant impact in preventing injuries and deaths from circulation entrapments.

The agency must continue to play its oversight role in ensuring that the law meets its mandate. In addition, we understand that the agency was very helpful to Congresswoman Debby Wasserman Schultz (D-FL)—who led the fight for the law--in recommending ways to change the law so that the state grant program can be effective. That is appreciated.

Carbon Monoxide

This substance, known as “The Silent Killer,” remains a threat to children and other vulnerable populations. It is called “silent” because it is odorless and tasteless. It is seasonal, hitting the north hard during the winter because of snow and the Gulf Coast during hurricane season. This is when people use gas powered instruments for heat and power. In addition, there is another area where a new product innovation has exposed people to an emerging threat. Drivers are using automobile keyless ignition controls to turn on their cars in garages, distracted and forgetting that they did so. This is causing CO injury and death. The educational role the agency plays in encouraging people to install CO detectors and ensure that their batteries are charged. Here’s why: A 2008 survey found that fewer than 30 percent of households had a CO alarm. However, a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that audible electronic CO alarms could have prevented over 50 percent of CO-related deaths.

Sports Safety

Safe Kids recently released the results of a survey it conducted of 2000 parents, children and coaches on their attitudes and knowledge about sports injury prevention. It is part of a multi-year initiative we have to meet the challenge of youth sports injuries. The news has been filled with stories of concussion injuries in kids’ contact sports as well as professional sports. Several federal agencies have been engaged in this effort, notably the CDC and the CPSC. The agency is to be commended for its vigilance in examining helmets for their effectiveness but also your recent partnership with the NFL and manufacturers to replace football helmets in underserved communities. This is an example of the creativity which we need in government, especially in a time of austerity.

Sequestration

Before we get to making the FY 2014 budget, we must emerge from the danger of an indiscriminate sequestration which could render an agency like CPSC ineffectual. Perhaps I am speaking to the choir, but it is vital, first, that Congress and the White House come to a solution which avoids sequestration. Second, if there is an across-the-board, I hope the agency will keep in mind the foregoing priorities, and I intend to send a copy of this testimony to the Office of Management and Budget as it makes provisions for sequestration.

Conclusion

I thank you for the opportunity to hear our ideas on the agency’s budget priorities. I speak for a special class of consumers. Kids are depending on the CPSC for its due diligence as a watchdog, educator and tester. While I have confidence that the job is being performed effectively today, the CPSC must be supported with adequate budget resources to continue its indispensable role.

Kate Carr

Kate Carr serves as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional childhood injury, the number one cause of death to children in the United States.

Prior to joining Safe Kids Worldwide in October 2011, she served as Managing Director of Malaria No More and played a lead role in resource mobilization and expansion of programmatic activities in Africa. Kate's experience in leading worldwide organizations includes the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation where, as President and CEO, she expanded the Foundation's work beyond the United States and promoted global education, awareness and compassion about children with HIV/AIDS. She also established the Glaser Pediatric Research Network to support clinical research beyond HIV/AIDS in children. Kate also served as President and CEO at Accelerate Brain Cancer Cure (ABC2) and focused efforts on collaborative support for translational research in brain cancer.

Kate's political experience includes serving as Special Assistant to the President, Office of Public Liaison at the White House and working on multiple local, state and national campaigns.

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