



March 20, 2019

Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
U.S. Senate  
302 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable John Hoeven  
U.S. Senate  
338 Russell Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Klobuchar and Hoeven:

On behalf of Safe Kids Worldwide and 24 Safe Kids coalitions from 13 states across the country, we write to thank you and express our support for your proposed legislation, the “Nicholas and Zachary Burt Memorial Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act”. This important legislation will help states prevent tragedies involving carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, a hazard to which young children and pregnant women are especially vulnerable. We write as Safe Kids Worldwide coalitions from areas prone to cold weather in the winter and natural disasters such as hurricanes—areas where the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning is especially acute.

Carbon monoxide is called the “silent killer” because it is colorless, odorless and undetectable without the aid of a CO detector. CO exposure can cause cognitive impairment, loss of consciousness, coma and death. Over 20,000 people per year are admitted to U.S. emergency rooms for unintentional CO poisoning, and over 2,300 are hospitalized.<sup>1</sup> The risk of CO poisoning is heightened in states with cold-weather winters and areas prone to natural disasters, where many families rely on gas-fired heating systems, generators and appliances that can emit CO.

It is right that you have named the bill in honor of Nicholas and Zachary Burt. Like many, the Burt family initially confused the symptoms of CO poisoning for the flu. As they realized the danger, the Burts struggled to rescue their children, while already weakened by their own poisoning. Tragically, they were too late to save 4-year-old Nicholas and infant Zachary; fortunately, 5-year-old Ryan survived as did his heroic parents.

A family in North Dakota was more fortunate. As Ryan C. of Grand Forks, ND tells the story, he woke with a headache and found his wife lying on the floor; she felt dizzy, sick to her stomach and had a pounding headache. He went into the room of his nearly 2-year-old son and found him lying down and looking pale, not excited and bouncing up and down as usual. Ryan called his mom who suspected CO poisoning, and she was right. The Burts rushed to the ER and, thankfully, all of them survived. First responders reported that the CO level was “off the charts”; the batteries of the Carlsons’ CO detector were dead.

We can prevent CO poisoning. The most effective way is to install carbon monoxide detection devices in places where people—especially children—live, work, sleep, and learn. An average of over 400 people die of unintentional CO poisoning per year, but only a little over 40 percent of homeowners report having a working CO detector.<sup>2 3</sup> Your legislation will help prevent these tragedies from happening.

Safe Kids Worldwide is a grassroots nonprofit organization working to prevent childhood injury, the number one cause of death for children in the United States. We work with an extensive network of

more than 400 coalitions in the U.S. More than 100 of our coalitions are based at pediatric and medical institutions, and also at firehouses, police stations and health departments. As a trusted, go-to resource for parents, we educate on how to prevent injury and advocate for smart public policy. Working together, we can do much more for kids everywhere.

Sincerely,

Safe Kids Alaska  
Safe Kids Kenai Peninsula  
Safe Kids Central California  
Safe Kids Santa Clara/San Mateo  
Safe Kids Larimer County  
Safe Kids Miami-Dade  
Safe Kids Illinois  
Safe Kids Chicago  
Safe Kids Edwards County  
Safe Kids Bartholomew County  
Safe Kids Oakland County  
Safe Kids Minnesota  
Safe Kids Northwest Metro Minneapolis

Safe Kids New York  
Safe Kids Otsego County  
Safe Kids Grand Forks  
Safe Kids Minot  
Safe Kids Fargo-Moorhead  
Safe Kids Bismarck-Mandan  
Safe Kids Utah  
Safe Kids Thurston County  
Safe Kids Wisconsin  
Safe Kids Southeast Wisconsin  
Safe Kids Wood County  
Safe Kids Worldwide

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<sup>1</sup> Raub JA, Mathieu-Nolf M, Hampson NB, Thom SR. Carbon monoxide poisoning—a public health perspective. *Toxicology*. 2000; 145:1–14. [PubMed: 10771127]

<sup>2</sup> Sircar K, Clower J, Shin MK, Bailey C, King M, Yip F. Carbon monoxide poisoning deaths in the United States, 1999 to 2012. *Am J Emerg Med* 2015;33:1140–5DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6608a9>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2011 American Housing Survey.