

Chairman Dingell at the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection hearing entitled "Protecting Our Children: Current Issues in Consumer Product Safety"

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, TRADE, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION HEARING ON "PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN: CURRENT ISSUES IN CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY"
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I commend Chairman Rush for holding this hearing today. A country's highest responsibility is to protect its children, and I am troubled that our country may be falling short. It appears we are tolerating far too many preventable deaths and injuries to America's children caused by defective, unsafe, and truly hazardous consumer products. I fear that a critical regulatory system is broken and in need of serious reform.

All of us are saddened and outraged at the consequences of these product failures. When we hear about such incidences occurring, we ask "How could that have happened?" Incidences such as:

• Children who die or are maimed simply because their parents put them to sleep in a crib "a product they bought believing it was designed to protect their child.

• Swimming pools with dangerous drains that can entangle a child's hair and cause her to drown.

• Toys and children's jewelry made of high quantities of lead, when we know that everything goes straight into a small child's mouth.

We all believe such tragedies are preventable. This hearing will explore the reasons why our children are so at risk. Among the questions I believe should be considered include:

• Do we need more exacting safety standards for children's products?

• Do we need stiffer penalties for violations of those standards?

• Do we need stricter and swifter law enforcement so manufacturers know that we are serious about preventing dangerous products from reaching the marketplace?

• Do we need to improve the recall system so that it effectively removes hazardous products from store shelves, and also alerts those who have already purchased such products?

â€¢ Do we need more comprehensive educational programs so families are better informed about the products they buy for their children? And finally:

â€¢ Are serious improvements to the CPSC needed so the agency can do a better job of protecting our children? Is the agency too small to carry out the responsibilities that it has been given? What barriers stand in its way to effectively regulate hazardous products?

I look forward to working with Chairman Rush and his Subcommittee in answering these critical questions. This hearing starts us on the road toward fixing a system that appears broken. For the sake of our Nationâ€™s children, we must work with all deliberate speed to fix it, so that our country fulfills this most crucial responsibility.

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