

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
Legislative Hearing on VIN Database and Auto Whistleblower Bills
September 25, 2015**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

I want to welcome everyone to today's hearing on the draft companion legislation to the Motor Vehicle Safety Whistleblower Act, and the discussion draft of the Improving Recall Tracking Act.

In 2014, there were over 63 million vehicles recalled in the United States due to safety violations. This represents the highest number of vehicle recalls in more than three decades.

Under current law, vehicle manufacturers are required to report defects and noncompliance to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Our chairman has seen to it with the good work he did on the TREAD Act. But there still have been times when the reporting has been too slow.

The Motor Vehicle Safety Whistleblower Act is intended to foster greater attention and responsiveness to vehicle safety defects. It does so by providing an incentive to automotive employees and contractors who report potential safety violations to the U.S. Department of Transportation that are concealed or go unreported. The bill encourages employees to report safety problems within their companies first to allow automakers the opportunity to address possible issues. This is an important point because it keeps the incentive to work within the system. The bill is meant to enhance current early reporting systems that have already been instituted by Congress. Furthermore, the bill is designed with the express purpose of exposing and stopping instances of wrongdoing, and protecting the safety and wellbeing of the public.

In addition to the Motor Vehicle Safety Whistleblower Act, we will have an opportunity to examine the discussion draft of the Improving Recall Tracking Act. This proposal would direct the Department of Transportation to establish a national database of vehicle identification numbers and driver registration information. It is intended to facilitate the consumer notification process in the event of a vehicle safety recall.

In light of recent recalls, it has become apparent that one of the main challenges of removing defective vehicles from the road is making sure that the right consumers are notified of the defect in a timely manner. This hearing will give us an opportunity to discuss how a national database housing current driver registration information and vehicle identification numbers could help improve the consumer recall notification process beyond the processes that are in place today. We will also hear how the industry is currently responding to these challenges so we can figure out how to improve the system.

Vehicle safety is a very serious issue that continues to be a concern for this subcommittee and the driving public. In past hearings on this subject, I have said that Americans deserve more. The legislative proposals we will consider today are a step in the right direction towards providing the driving public with confidence that the vehicles they are driving are safe and the recall process works. I thank the witnesses for their testimony and I look forward to an engaging discussion on these measures.

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