

**Carol ("Cally") Houck  
Ojai, California  
Mother of Raechel and Jacqueline Houck**

October 15, 2015

Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
The Capitol H-232  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Fred Upton  
Chairman, House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Michael C. Burgess  
Chairman, House Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: Passage of H.R. 2198, the Raechel and Jacqueline Houck Safe Rental Car Act**

Dear Speaker Boehner, Chairman Upton, and Chairman Burgess:

I write to you as the mother of two beautiful, talented, treasured daughters, Raechel and Jacqueline, who were killed by an unrepaired, recalled Chrysler rental car, seeking your support for H.R. 2198, which is named the *Raechel and Jacqueline Houck Safe Rental Car Act* in their memory.

They were just 24 and 20, full of life, and devoted to making the world a better place. The rental car company handed them the keys to a recalled Chrysler PT Cruiser. It had a defective steering component that was prone to leaking, causing an under-hood fire and loss of steering. Chrysler had issued the safety recall notice about 30 days before, but the rental company just kept renting it out, without bothering to get the free repairs done first.

On their way back home from visiting their father, younger brother, and me in Ojai, CA, their rental car caught on fire near Santa Cruz, and Raechel lost steering. The car veered across the median and crashed head-on into a tractor trailer. Witnesses told the highway patrol that their rental car was on fire before the crash.

Eventually, the rental car company admitted 100% liability for their deaths, and years later, they also apologized to me. While what they did was illegal under California law, existing law was inadequate to prevent my daughters' deaths. Other states have similar laws, but they too are not enforceable until after there are "damages" or a personal injury or death. That is why we need a uniform, federal law that is enforceable by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Only NHTSA can do the pro-active policing of the law, to ensure compliance and prevent tragedies *before* people are injured or killed.

Chrysler and other auto manufacturers are telling Congress that rental companies should be required only to inform consumers when a rental car is under a safety recall, unless the recall is a so- called “do not drive” recall. Such a law would not have saved my daughters’ lives. The PT Cruiser was the last car on the lot, and even if the rental car company had notified Raechel and Jackie about the defect, they weren't mechanics, and wouldn't have known how risky the defect was. Plus Chrysler chose not to issue a “do not drive” warning, which is extremely rare and has nothing do to with how unsafe a vehicle is – it's basically done for PR reasons, usually for owners of relatively new cars that are getting bad press.

Virtually the entire rental car industry (with few exceptions, including a company called Rent-a- Wreck) is now working with me and auto safety groups to enact the Raechel and Jacqueline Houck Safe Rental Car Act, which would make it a violation of federal law for a rental car company to rent or sell recalled cars with lethal safety defects, until the defects have been repaired. GM, Honda, AAA and the State Farm Insurance Company are also supporting the bill. Earlier this year, the California New Car Dealers Association officially sponsored legislation in California that was modeled after the federal safe rental car bill. Polling shows that the American public overwhelmingly supports enactment of this law. Support crosses party lines and the many divides in our nation. The bottom line is that when people rent a vehicle from a reputable rental car company, or are loaned a car at a car dealership, they fully expect that it will be safe.

I am so proud to tell you that Sen. Thune included the *Raechel and Jacqueline Houck Safe Rental Car Act* in his safety legislation, which was then included in the Senate highway bill that passed the Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support in July. The Senate passed the rental car legislation despite the fact that the Alliance of Auto Manufacturers, Global Automakers, and National Automobile Dealers Association remain opposed. The Senators realized that those trade associations should not stand in the way of a common sense safety measure that is overwhelmingly supported by consumers and the only industry that would be regulated under the bill.

Tragically, delays in passing this legislation have already claimed another innocent life. Last fall, another talented, beautiful young woman, Jewel Brangman, age 26, was also killed by a recalled rental car. It had an exploding Takata air bag, and when she was in a multiple-vehicle fender- bender, everyone else walked away, but flying metal from the air bag severed an artery in her neck.

How many more lives will be lost because of unsafe, recalled rental vehicles before Congress acts? The Senate has done the right thing – it is now in your hands. If you believe, like I do, that all human life is precious, you will support this bill and make sure it is included in any highway legislation that is passed by the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

Carol “Cally” Houck

Cc: Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi  
Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone  
H.R. 2198 sponsors Reps. Lois Capps, Jan Schakowsky, G.K. Butterfield and Walter Jones