



March 23, 2005

Senator Ted Stevens, Chairman  
Senator Daniel Inouye, Ranking Member  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Stevens and Senator Inouye:

As you may know, yesterday the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announced a \$4 million fine imposed on Graco Children's Products Inc, one of the nation's largest children's product manufacturers. The CPSC action comes as a result of Graco's failure, from 1991 to 2002, to inform the government in a timely manner about more than 12 million products that posed a danger to young children, including hundreds of incidents and injuries to children involving 16 different products.

We commend the CPSC for its tough action and for imposing a sizeable fine on this company. However, we believe it is time for Congress to increase its role in overseeing the persistent failure of children's product manufacturers to report to the CPSC those products that pose a danger to young children, in violation of federal requirements. We therefore encourage you to hold oversight hearings on this critical issue to ensure that manufacturers are complying with the law.

We also are concerned about the many products these manufacturers have had to recall in the last decade. When Consumers Union testified in June 2003 on the CPSC's reauthorization before the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs and Product Safety, we noted that the top five manufacturers of durable children's products have had an alarming number of recalls over the past decade.

From March 1993 to February 2003, according to CPSC records, these companies had the following numbers of recalls:

Dorel Juvenile Group -- 20 products recalled (includes Cosco 12, Safety First 8)  
Graco -11 products recalled  
Century -11 products recalled  
Kolcraft - 9 products recalled  
Evenflo - 9 products recalled

In our 2003 testimony, we urged Congress to hold oversight hearings related to juvenile products and to look at whether there is a pattern of manufacturers failing to report information learned about hazards from their own products, and why there seems to be an ongoing series of baby products subject to recall.

An initial safety-oriented design, rigorous pre-marketing testing, and strong industry-wide voluntary safety standards should prevent the recurring problem of having to recall product after product.

In light of this latest fine on Graco, we are renewing our request to Congress – both the Senate and House - to hold oversight hearings on these critical issues.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns. If you have any questions, please contact Sally Greenberg or Janell Mayo Duncan at Consumers Union, 202-462-6262.

Cc: Chairman Harold Stratton  
Commissioner Thomas Moore  
Consumer Product Safety Commission