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Dear Senator:

Once again, a major toy company is announcing a recall involving hundreds of thousands of children's toys from China that contain excessive amounts of lead. We at Consumers Union, the publisher of Consumer Reports, appreciate the challenges that the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) faces in keeping unsafe products out of our homes and the hands of our children. Nevertheless, we urge Congress to act quickly to provide the agency with the resources and tools it needs to address unsafe toys and children's products.

On Tuesday, September 4, [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported that although the CPSC says manufacturers must report all claims of potentially hazardous product defects within 24 hours, Mattel took months to make such disclosures to the agency, including the September 4th recall and last month's recall of nearly 18 million toys. According to the story, "Mattel Chairman and Chief Executive Robert Eckert said in an interview that the company discloses problems on its own timetable because it believes both the law and the commission's enforcement practices are unreasonable. Mattel said it should be able to evaluate hazards internally before alerting any outsiders, regardless of what the law says." We strongly disagree. We urge you to promptly investigate this matter and insist that the CPSC enforce its laws.

On Sunday, September 2, [The New York Times](#) noted that top officials at the CPSC have "blocked enforcement actions, weakened industry oversight rules and promoted voluntary compliance over safety mandates, according to interviews with current and former senior agency officials and consumer groups and a review of commission documents." For example, the story says, the agency has only a handful of inspectors looking for hazardous cargo before it enters the country and only a single employee responsible for testing suspected defective toys. "Safety initiatives have been stalled or dropped after dozens of jobs were eliminated in budget cutbacks." We urge Congress to work with the CPSC and the Administration to increase funding for more inspectors and to strengthen the agency's authorities to adequately address safety issues. We support legislative efforts that include going beyond current regulations on lead in paint coatings to include a ban on lead in all children's products. We also support efforts to require third-party safety certification verifying compliance with product safety standards on children's products.

As a final note, on Saturday, September 1, [The Washington Post](#) reported that manufacturers are increasingly exporting substandard goods, including toys that do not meet U.S. safety standards. "Companies notified the [CPSC] 97 times last year that they planned to export goods that did not meet some aspect of U.S. safety standards. That is up from 57 times in 2002, according to the agency." Consumers Union believes that allowing U.S. manufacturers to export goods that do not meet U.S. standards not only puts foreigners at risk but also hurts the United States' ability to force other countries to comply with our rules.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

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