



**Written Testimony on FY 2020 Consumer Product Safety Commission Appropriations
Presented by William Wallace, Manager, Home and Safety Policy, Consumer Reports
To the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government**

The Honorable John Kennedy, Chairman
The Honorable Christopher Coons, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

May 24, 2019

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Coons:

Consumer Reports, the independent, non-profit member organization,¹ strongly urges you and your colleagues on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government to significantly increase funding for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in FY 2020 and to reject the inclusion of any policy riders that would undermine essential protections for consumers. The CPSC has a critical mission to protect the public from risks associated with consumer products, but its funding and staffing levels are insufficient to carry out the work necessary to fulfill this mission. The scope of work is enormous: for example, the CPSC reviews about 8,000 unintentional product-related death certificates each year, and is aware of at least 16 million emergency department-treated injuries per year associated with—if not necessarily caused by—consumer products.² These injuries alone cost society more than \$900 billion a year.³ Accordingly, we urge you to at least double the CPSC’s funding above the FY 2019 enacted level of \$127 million.

Established by Congress in 1972, the CPSC is charged with protecting the public from hazards associated with over 15,000 different types of consumer products. Its statutes give the Commission the authority to set mandatory safety standards; participate in voluntary safety standards; require labeling; remove defective products from the shelves and order product recalls and other corrective actions when necessary; collect injury, death, and incident data;

¹ Founded in 1936, Consumer Reports uses its dozens of labs, auto test center, and survey research center to rate thousands of products and services annually. CR works together with its more than 6 million members for a fairer, safer, and healthier world, and reaches nearly 20 million people each month across our print and digital media properties.

² U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, “2017 Annual Report to the President and Congress,” at 1 and 4, available online at www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/FY17-CPSC-Annual-Report.pdf.

³ *Id.* at 6.

and educate the public about consumer product safety.

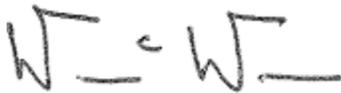
In 1974, the first full year that the CPSC was operating, Congress appropriated the equivalent of more than \$180 million in today's dollars, accounting for inflation,⁴ and 786 FTEs to the agency. CPSC's staffing levels rose to a high of 978 employees in 1980 before facing severe and repeated cuts during the 1980s. At the time of its FY 2020 budget request, released earlier this year, the CPSC estimates 539 FTEs under current fiscal year funding.⁵

The consumer product market is changing rapidly, and the CPSC must be able to keep pace. If the CPSC continues to be inadequately funded, it will be unable to protect consumers from either longstanding, well understood hazards, or those that are new or emerging.

The CPSC's budget request for FY 2020 would not allow the agency to maintain the workforce nor the workload needed to sufficiently protect the public. Consumers depend on the CPSC to protect them from unsafe products, and historically, Congress has strongly agreed that the agency should have the resources needed to do so.⁶ We urge you to provide the agency with significantly more funding and staffing and oppose efforts to limit, through policy riders, the CPSC's authority or its activities supporting consumer safety.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that the CPSC receives sufficient funding and staffing to keep the public safe from product hazards and protect consumers from product-related deaths and injuries, many of which can be prevented.

Respectfully submitted,



William Wallace
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Consumer Reports

⁴ 88 Stat. 1840, reflecting the \$37,454,000 appropriated by Congress to the CPSC in Pub. L. No. 93-563 (Dec. 31, 1974) as converted from December 1974 dollars to April 2019 dollars using the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator (online at data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl).

⁵ This total of 539 FTEs in FY 2019 is down from the 552 FTEs that were at the agency in FY 2017.

⁶ The bipartisan Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) of 2008 (Pub. L. No. 110-314) overwhelmingly passed both chambers of Congress, including a general authorization of appropriations reflecting significantly greater funding than the agency has now.