

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Safety Advocates Applaud Bipartisan Support for Technology to Prevent Hot Car Deaths** *Celebrating inclusion of HOT CARS Act as part of the Senate AV START Act*

Philadelphia, PA – KidsAndCars.org is elated to announce that today the HOT CARS Act was advanced by the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee as part of the AV START Act (American Vision for Safer Transportation through Advancement of Revolutionary Technologies Act, S. 1885). The legislation will require technology be put in vehicles as standard equipment to help prevent children from dying of heatstroke in cars.

We want to thank Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Al Franken (D-MN) and Roger Wicker (R-MS) for sponsoring the HOT CARS Act (S. 1666) and Senators Blumenthal (D-CT) and Wicker (R-MS), members of the Commerce Committee, for offering this life-saving provision as an amendment. This safety advancement will help spare countless families from having to suffer the unthinkable loss of a child. Their steadfast commitment to the safety and well-being of America's children is to be recognized and praised. This is a huge step in the right direction towards eliminating preventable hot car deaths of children.

"It can take mere minutes on a hot day for a car to turn into a deathtrap for a small child," Sen. Richard Blumenthal said. "Since I first introduced the HOT CARS Act in July, there have been nine deaths – nine deaths that might have been prevented with a simple sensor. I was proud to work with my colleagues and countless tireless advocates to craft this legislation, which will ensure every new car sold in the United States is equipped with the basic technology to save a life."

"The future of autonomous vehicles is quickly becoming a reality," Sen. Roger Wicker said. "As Congress works to develop federal policies for the safe use of these vehicles on our roads, ensuring that our children are protected from heatstroke should be a part of that discussion. I am pleased that the committee recognizes the importance of installing sensors in cars to let drivers know when a child has been left in the backseat. This is a sensible solution that will help save lives."

Since 1990, over 800 children have died in these tragedies. On average, 37 children die needlessly every year from vehicular heatstroke. Sadly, in 2017 we have already exceeded that average with 40 deaths and there are still 3 months to go. Children can perish in temperatures as low as 50-60 degrees.

Families who lost children have publicly shared their personal tragedies time and time again so others will not have to endure the same unending grief.

Norman Collins, grandfather to “Bishop” Collins who died in a hot car in 2011 said, “As the grandfather of an infant who passed away in a hot car, it helps to heal my heart to know that the legislation is moving forward. The lives of so many children and the agony of their families will be spared which helps my family to realize that the death of our dear Bishop was not in vain.”

These deaths are not just affecting the families of those involved, but also first responders. Christine Hladky, an EMT who responded to an ‘infant left in vehicle’ call, recounts “I cried the entire time I performed chest compressions. This went on for almost 30 minutes.” Christine was later diagnosed with PTSD and had to leave her beloved profession, as have other responders who found they could no longer work in that field.

“The data shows that education is not enough when parents under stress or experiencing sleep deprivation can unknowingly leave a child alone in a vehicle. All it takes is a simple change in a daily routine to cause a parent to drive past their childcare center. This bill, when signed into law, will utilize technology that is already available and being put into vehicles to save precious young lives,” said Janette Fennell, founder and president of KidsAndCars.org. “Bravo,” she continued.

To learn more about nontraffic dangers to children visit [www.KidsAndCars.org](http://www.KidsAndCars.org).

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Founded in 1996, KidsAndCars.org is the only national nonprofit child safety organization dedicated solely to preventing injuries and deaths of children in and around vehicles. KidsAndCars.org promotes awareness among parents, caregivers and the general public about the dangers to children, including backover and frontover incidents, and heatstroke, from being unknowingly left in a vehicle. The organization works to prevent these tragedies through data collection, education and public awareness, policy change and survivor advocacy. For more information, visit [www.KidsAndCars.org](http://www.KidsAndCars.org).