May 19, 2010

The Honorable Jackie Speier
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Speier;

We are writing to express our strong support for your legislation addressing the need for motor vehicles to be equipped with electronic technology to record critical information concerning motor vehicle crashes. Each year there are about 6 million crashes resulting in nearly 40,000 fatalities and over 2 million occupant injuries. In order to reduce the highway mortality and morbidity toll it is essential to understand factors that contribute to crash causation. One method to achieve this goal is to equip motor vehicles with crash data technology such as event data recorders or other systems that are currently available and have been in use for over two decades.

Similar technology is standard equipment on planes and trains, providing essential information in investigations of aviation and rail crashes to prevent the same safety problems from occurring again. Objective information on the performance of airbags, brakes, transmission, engine throttle and other systems could be used to more accurately reconstruct events leading up to a crash, develop safety countermeasures and improve vehicle safety systems.

Consumers need to know when there are defects in their vehicles that threaten their lives. The recent rash of life-threatening incidents related to sudden acceleration of Toyota vehicles and the lengthy delay in identifying the root cause of the problem point to the need for accurate and timely vehicle performance information. Your legislation will result in every vehicle being equipped with state of the art technology to record critical crash information while ensuring that individual privacy of vehicle owners is protected.

We strongly support your legislation and look forward to working with you to enact it into law.

Sincerely,

Joan Claybrook, President Emeritus
Public Citizen

Clarence Ditlow
Executive Director
Center for Auto Safety

Janette Fennell
Founder & President
KIDS AND CARS

Ami Gadhia, Policy Counsel
Consumers Union

Jacqueline S. Gillan, Vice President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Jack Gillis
Director of Public Affairs
Consumer Federation of America

Andrew McGuire
Executive Director
Trauma Foundation