

**Carol (Cally) Houck**  
**Mother of Raechel and Jacqueline Houck**  
**Ojai, California**  
**February 8, 2016**

Honorable Delegates and Senators  
Virginia General Assembly  
State Capitol  
Richmond, VA

**Re: SB 709 and HB 1232 – Car Dealer Immunity for selling unsafe recalled used cars with lethal safety defects: OPPOSITION**

Dear Delegates and Senators:

My name is Cally Houck. I am a resident of Ojai, California. My beautiful, precious daughters Raechel and Jacqueline were just 24 and 20 years old when they were killed by a recalled Chrysler PT Cruiser that had not been repaired before they were handed the keys. It had a defective steering hose that made the car prone to catching on fire. When the car erupted into flames, they lost steering and collided with an 18-wheeler.

Their father and I won a unanimous jury verdict under existing state laws that are common in all 50 states, and were awarded \$15 million in compensatory damages.

Last year, the U.S. Congress passed the Raechel and Jacqueline Houck Safe Rental Car Act, named in their memories, to prohibit rental car companies, including auto dealers, with 35 vehicles or more in their rental / loaner fleets, from renting, loaning, or selling unsafe recalled cars. President Obama signed the bill into law on December 4, 2015.

It is important to note that the Republican-controlled Congress, including both major political parties, rejected attempts by the National Automobile Dealers Association to instead legalize putting consumers into recalled vehicles with “disclosure.” The “deadly disclosure” legislation backed by the dealers in Congress failed to even come to a vote in a single committee.

That is because such a law would have made it “open season” on car buyers and their families, by legalizing the sales of deathtrap cars.

Make no mistake. The bills before you now, SB 709 and HB 1232, would protect car dealers, not consumers. These bills are also worse than the current practices of many dealers across the nation, including in Virginia. AutoNation, the largest new car dealership chain in America, has publicly announced that it is ensuring that all the new and used cars it sells are safe, and have had the safety recall repairs performed, before they leave their lots. Other dealers have publicly stated that they do not sell unrepaired recalled vehicles, whether they are new or used. That is because not only are such practices illegal, but they are totally irresponsible and reckless, and show an utter disregard for human life.

These bills, backed by the car dealers, would allow unsafe cars being recalled due to lethal safety defects to be sold to consumers, regardless how they were advertised, whether the salesperson tells their customers all their cars are perfectly safe, or how many people those dangerous safety defects have maimed or killed.

If these bills before you today had been in effect in 2004, they would not have saved my daughters. Had they even noticed and read a “disclosure” about the recall, my girls, in their early 20's, with no engineering or mechanical experience, and no awareness of other fatalities associated with that defect, would not have been equipped to accurately assess the risk involved. If they had been told verbally that the defect did not pose a serious hazard, in all likelihood they would have believed it. And after their deaths, there would have been no way to prove what they were told.

I read that Don Hall, the President and CEO of the Virginia Automobile Dealers Association, told the *Daily Press* in Richmond that “the vast majority of recalls are for minor things.” Unfortunately, that is not only untrue, but also exactly the type of misleading statement that could trick someone into buying a car with a lethal safety defect – creating the mistaken impression that it is not dangerous.

The dealers are not safety experts. They also have a blatant conflict of interest in selling cars as rapidly as possible, to maximize their profits. Now they are asking the legislators in Virginia to second-guess the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the auto manufacturers who have issued the safety recalls.

Please vote NO on these terrible bills. Lives are at stake. Thank you.