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November 16, 2017

Commissioner Charles A. Richman
New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
PO Box 800
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Commissioner Richman:

We write to you in support of proposed changes to the New Jersey State Fire Code to protect families in single family homes. A working smoke alarm is one of the most vital parts of a safe home, but unfortunately many smoke alarms fail to function because of a dead, inoperable or disabled battery. The proposed code change will help to protect families from home fires by requiring new smoke alarms come with sealed-in, tamper-proof, worry-free 10 year batteries. Moreover, they will save homeowners money because they will not have to change the batteries every six months.

The need for these changes is clear:

- 6 out of 10 homeowners do not know that the batteries in a traditional smoke alarm need to be changed every six months.
- According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), some 60 percent of home fire deaths occur in homes without a functional smoke alarm.
- The NFPA found that 47 percent of smoke alarms that failed to operate during fires had missing or disconnected batteries.
- According to the U.S. Fire Administration's fatalities database of news articles about fires, at least 10 children under age 14 died in New Jersey home fires (some which might have involved homes with working smoke alarms).

By adopting this code change, New Jersey will join at least six other states and six major cities that have also passed 10-year alarm legal requirements. Because New Jersey is a trend setter in child safety, adoption of this code change will send a serious message nationally.

Safe Kids is a network of organizations across the country and globe dedicated to the prevention of unintentional injury to children, the number one killer of kids in the United States. Our local and state coalitions number over 400 throughout the nation, working on a range of risk areas from motor vehicle crashes, drowning hazards to the risk of fire. We have a strong presence in New Jersey, with 11 local coalitions led by Safe Kids New Jersey at Central Jersey Family Health Consortium. We are proud to stand with our firefighters and safety advocates in supporting this code change. Thank you for your leadership in helping to keep the children of New Jersey safe, and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Green".

Anthony Green
Director, Public Policy
Safe Kids Worldwide