



March 26, 2021

Honorable Amy Klobuchar
U.S. Senate
425 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable John Hoeven
U.S. Senate
338 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Klobuchar and Hoeven:

On behalf of Safe Kids Worldwide and 27 Safe Kids coalitions from 15 states across the country, we write to thank you and express our support for your proposed legislation, the “Nicholas and Zachary Burt Memorial Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act”. This important legislation will help states prevent tragedies involving carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, a hazard to which young children and pregnant women are especially vulnerable. We write as Safe Kids Worldwide coalitions from areas prone to cold weather in the winter and, in other times of the year, natural disasters such as hurricanes. As we write this letter, Texans, including its children, sustained serious injuries and death from CO poisoning as a result of the extreme cold weather and electric power grid failures.

Carbon monoxide is called the “silent killer” because it is colorless, odorless and undetectable without the aid of a CO detector. CO exposure can cause cognitive impairment, loss of consciousness, coma and death. Over 20,000 people per year are admitted to U.S. emergency rooms for unintentional CO poisoning, and over 2,300 are hospitalized.¹ The risk of CO poisoning is heightened in states with cold-weather winters and areas prone to natural disasters, where many families rely on gas-fired heating systems, generators and appliances that can emit CO.

It is right that you have named the bill in honor of Nicholas and Zachary Burt. Like many, the Burt family initially confused the symptoms of CO poisoning for the flu. As they realized the danger, the Burts struggled to rescue their children, while already weakened by their own poisoning. Tragically, they were too late to save 4-year-old Nicholas and infant Zachary; fortunately, 5-year-old Ryan survived as did his heroic parents.

A family in North Dakota was more fortunate. As Ryan C. of Grand Forks, ND tells the story, he woke with a headache and found his wife lying on the floor; she felt dizzy, sick to her stomach and had a pounding headache. He went into the room of his nearly 2-year-old son and found him lying down and looking pale, not excited and bouncing up and down as usual. Ryan called his mom who suspected CO poisoning, and she was right. The Burts rushed to the ER and, thankfully, all of them survived. First responders reported that the CO level was “off the charts”; the batteries of the Carlsons’ CO detector were dead.

We can prevent CO poisoning. The most effective way is to install carbon monoxide detection devices in places where people—especially children—live, work, sleep, and learn. An average of over 400 people die of unintentional CO poisoning per year, but only a little over 40 percent of homeowners report having a working CO detector.^{2 3} Your legislation will help prevent these tragedies from happening.

Safe Kids Worldwide is a grassroots nonprofit organization working to prevent childhood injury, the number one cause of death for children in the United States. We work with an extensive network of more than 400 coalitions in the U.S. More than 100 of our coalitions are based at pediatric and medical institutions, and also at firehouses, police stations and health departments. As a trusted, go-to resource for parents, we educate on how to prevent injury and advocate for smart public policy. Working together, we can do much more for kids everywhere.

Sincerely,

Safe Kids Alaska

Safe Kids Kenai Peninsula, AK

Safe Kids Central California

Safe Kids Santa Clara/San Mateo, CA

Safe Kids Larimer County, CO

Safe Kids Miami-Dade, FL

Safe Kids Illinois

Safe Kids Chicago, IL

Safe Kids Edwards, Wayne and White Counties, IN

Safe Kids Bartholomew County, IN

Safe Kids Oakland County, MI

Safe Kids Minnesota

Safe Kids Northwest Metro Minneapolis, MN

Safe Kids New York

Safe Kids Otsego County, NY

Safe Kids Allegheny County, PA

Safe Kids Greater Dallas, TX

Safe Kids Greater Houston, TX

Safe Kids Grand Forks, ND

Safe Kids Minot, ND

Safe Kids Fargo-Moorhead, ND

Safe Kids Bismarck-Mandan, ND

Safe Kids Utah

Safe Kids Thurston County, WA

Safe Kids Wisconsin

Safe Kids Southeast Wisconsin

Safe Kids Wood and Clark Counties, WI

Safe Kids Worldwide

¹ Raub JA, Mathieu-Nolf M, Hampson NB, Thom SR. Carbon monoxide poisoning—a public health perspective. *Toxicology*. 2000; 145:1–14. [PubMed: 10771127]

² Sircar K, Clower J, Shin MK, Bailey C, King M, Yip F. Carbon monoxide poisoning deaths in the United States, 1999 to 2012. *Am J Emerg Med* 2015;33:1140–5DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6608a9>.

³ U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2011 American Housing Survey.