



UNITED STATES

**CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION**

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**CHAIR ALEX D. HOEHN-SARIC**

**Remarks of CPSC Chair Alex Hoehn-Saric  
Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association (JPMA) 2022 Summit  
May 4, 2022**

Good afternoon. Thank you for the invitation to speak at this year's Juvenile Product Manufacturer's Association (JPMA) Summit.

CPSC is an essential agency with an important and broad mandate that has been perennially underfunded and under resourced. Our mission is clear, and I am focusing my tenure as Chair on ensuring that we are doing everything we can to protect consumers in the marketplace. I especially want to recognize the hard-working staff of the CPSC that works tirelessly every day to ensure children remain safe.

In addition to the incredible staff, there is another group of people who I have the chance to work with every day, and those are my colleagues: Commissioners Dana Baiocco, Peter Feldman, and Rich Trumka. I also have gotten the chance to work closely with CPSC's Executive Director, Mary Boyle. And I am excited to have her joining us soon as a Commissioner.

While we have only been working together as a group for a few months, it has been a great experience to get to know my colleagues and I am certain we will continue to strengthen the collegial relationships we have already established.

There are three places where I have begun to put particular attention:

- First, I want the CPSC to become a household name, so that we are the place the public turns to when they hear about a recall or want product safety information or identify a hazard and want to raise a red flag. This means reaching out to and understanding the needs of all consumers, including vulnerable communities and communities of color. If deaths and injuries are hitting some communities more than others, the CPSC should understand that and communicate the issues in a manner that will be heard and acted upon.
- Second, I am focused on modernizing the CPSC so that it is better prepared to meet the changing needs of consumers and the marketplace. Among the challenges we face are

adapting to the growth of e-commerce. Online platforms that did not exist a decade or two ago are now driving the market. Consumers are buying directly from unknown manufacturers and importing goods in ways that are hard for us to monitor.

- Finally, but most importantly, CPSC always needs to put consumers first in the work that we do. We must work with industry to come up with voluntary standards, but where those standards are insufficient, we will turn to mandatory rules. Our recalls need to be conducted in a way that best serves consumers. And we should take appropriate enforcement action when companies violate the law and the public trust.

One of my top priorities is child safety. First and foremost in that area, I am focused on ensuring that the products that are made for use by young children and babies are safe. Caregivers expect that such products are safe. That is, unfortunately, not always true. Too often, we see unknown manufacturers selling consumers products on e-commerce platforms that don't meet safety standards. And even the most well-known players in the marketplace can fall short of expectations.

In addition, with respect to child safety, I am focusing on:

- Protecting children from hidden hazards in and around the home such as button batteries, magnets, furniture tip-overs, residential elevators, and corded window blinds;
- The importance of creating safe sleep environments for infants;
- Pool safety and drowning prevention; and
- Addressing the risks children face from riding on ATVs and other off road vehicles.

The CPSC depends on your industry to be a partner in our shared goal of increasing safety for children.

Your industry makes products that excite and enchant children, and that enable caregivers to better care for their young children. Your companies' products are an essential part of every child's home.

But that means that your industry also carries an immense responsibility; you play a vital role in ensuring the safety of babies and small children. The decisions that you make have a direct impact on the lives of the most vulnerable members of our society.

Safety by design should be the watch word when making products for this population. I ask that you work proactively to maximize safety when designing, manufacturing, and marketing products for children. And, when things go wrong, I urge your industry to act quickly to identify the hazard and prioritize effective outreach to your customers with recall information and remedies.

I have come to the agency at an historic time. In 2022 we are celebrating a milestone year with our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I believe there is value in recognizing the significant strides for safety CPSC has taken in reducing deaths and injuries from the products in our homes. This history will continue to help guide us on our journey to a world with far fewer preventable deaths and injuries associated with consumer products.

The data from our early years is astounding and show just how far we have come. In 1967, at the bill signing for the National Commission on Product Safety – the predecessor to the CPSC – President Johnson stated:

The homes that we live in can really be more dangerous than a booby-trapped mine field in the battle area.

He went on to talk about some of the injury and death statistics from that time, including “the 100,000 each year, mostly little children, who have their limbs crushed by the automatic clothes wringers.”

We have made a lot of progress since then. Since the founding of CPSC in 1972, crib deaths have dropped by 80 percent. And baby walker associated injuries that resulted in over 25,000 emergency room visits in 1992 dropped to an estimated 3,100 by 2020. That’s a decline of 88 percent.

However, we know that many challenges remain. And that children continue to be at risk.

I have been pleased to make progress on several key safety issues during my short tenure at the Commission. We have moved forward on regulatory proposals to ban hazardous magnet sets, to establish strict requirements for stability of clothing storage units, and to require safety standards for window blinds. We have established standards for crib mattresses that will go into effect this coming summer. And we have taken vigorous action to protect infants from dangerous sleep products, to ensure that residential elevators are safe for small children, and to develop more consumer-friendly recalls.

Just last week, Congress took a major step forward in protecting infants with passage of the Safe Sleep for Babies Act. Passage of this law, which bans inclined infant sleepers and crib bumpers, will save lives. It will provide further clarity to caregivers who are seeking to create a safe and comfortable sleep environment for their babies.

I appreciate that a lot of change is coming with these rules and legislation. But I know that your industry can rise to the challenge to build products to meet these standards. And that American consumers and vulnerable members of their households will be safer.

In closing, I want to thank you again for the invitation to speak today, and I look forward to continued discussion going forward.