CPSC Executive Session 1750 K Street, N.W.
April 29, 1976 Washington, D.C.

Presiding: Chairman Simpson
Present: Commissioner Franklin
Commissioner Kushner
Commissioner Pittle

ITEM

CPSC Views on H.R. 12348, a bill,

"To improve agency responsiveness to citizen complaints and inquiries, to require submission to Congress of information on administrative procedures used to handle citizen complaints and inquiries, and for other purposes."

(Briefing material transmitted by Office of Secretary April 22, 1976)

DECISION

The Commission approves the attached letter to the Honorable Jack Brooks, Chairman, Committee on Government Operations, setting forth the Commission's views on H.R. 12348.

VOTE

Concurring: Chairman Simpson
Commissioner Franklin
Commissioner Kushner
Commissioner Pittle

Submitted by: Office of the Secretary
For the Commission: Sadye E. Dunn, Secretary
Attachment
Honorale James T. Lynn
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. Lynn:

I am pleased to provide to the Office of Management and Budget six copies of our letter to the Chairman, Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives, who requested the views of the Consumer Product Safety Commission on H.R. 12343, a bill

"To improve agency responsiveness to citizen complaints and inquiries, to require submission to Congress of information on administrative procedures used to handle citizen complaints and inquiries, and for other purposes."

Sincerely,

RICHARD O. SIMPSON

Richard O. Simpson
Chairman

Enclosures (6)

DMELNICK:rnr:5/4/76 OGC #2363
C-02742

cc: Chairman
Commissioners
B. Ludden, CCM-1
T. McKay, OCR
S. Parent, Ex. Dir.
S. Dunn, Sec.
M. Petruska, OS
D. Melnick, OGC
gc chron
gc files
gc reading (2)
Honorable Jack Brooks
Chairman
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to your request for the comments of the Consumer Product Safety Commission on H.R. 12348, a bill

To improve agency responsiveness to citizen complaints and inquiries, to require submission to Congress of information on administrative procedures used to handle citizen complaints and inquiries, and for other purposes.

H.R. 12348 would require heads of executive agencies, including independent regulatory agencies, to submit to the Congress a report containing a description of administrative procedures used by each component of such agency to handle "administrative inquiries," which are defined to include citizen complaints and inquiries other than lawsuits, inquiries pursuant to an agency proceeding and requests pursuant to the Freedom of Information or Privacy Acts. The bill would require the agency head to take such steps, including publication in the Federal Register of procedures for handling administrative inquiries, as he shall determine will improve the uniformity, speed and comprehensiveness of the agency's response to such inquiries. In addition, H.R. 12348 would require a report containing a summary of such inquiries received during a ninety day period, the response made thereto, the time taken in making such response, and recommendations for legislative action to improve the handling of administrative inquiries.
The purposes of the Consumer Product Safety Act include, inter alia:

"To assist consumers in evaluating the comparative safety of consumer products; [and] to promote research and investigation into the causes and prevention of product-related deaths, illnesses, and injuries." 15 U.S.C. 2051(b).

In order to implement these purposes and to generally assist consumers in obtaining information relating to consumer products and Commission activities, the Commission has established in its Bureau of Information and Education, a toll-free "Consumer Hot-Line" to receive consumer complaints and inquiries and a correspondence unit to respond to administrative inquiries. During the twelve month period from March 1975 to February 1976, the Bureau of Information and Education received 11,894 written inquiries and 20,094 verbal inquiries over the Hot-Line.

The Commission considers these activities, in conjunction with other programs of information collection and injury investigation, as extremely important both as a channel of communication with consumers and as a source of information to assist the Commission in ordering its priorities. The Commission would, therefore, support any effort to improve the speed and adequacy of Federal agencies' responsiveness to such inquiries.

Since the Commission already maintains or plans to maintain the information which would be required by section 2 of H.R. 12348, that provision would not unduly burden the Commission. However, due to the number of complaints received, as indicated above, the summary required by section 4 of the bill would involve a considerable expenditure of resources. The Commission would, therefore, favor a more general reporting requirement than that presently contained in section 4(1).

Accordingly, with the exception of section 4(1), the Commission supports the enactment of H.R. 12348.

Sincerely,

RICHARD O. SIMPSON

Richard O. Simpson
Chairman

cc: Director, Office of
    Management and Budget