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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

January 26, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I write to request your assistance in combating the alarming increase in carjackings around the country. While addressing this growing problem requires action by a range of government, law enforcement, industry, and community stakeholders, the Department of Transportation can play a key role in promoting better coordination between vehicle manufacturers and law enforcement to prevent and respond to carjackings.

Specifically, I urge the Department to work with the auto industry and law enforcement to coordinate uniform and standardized methods for law enforcement to seek vehicle manufacturers' assistance in locating stolen vehicles. This will help decrease carjacking incidents by assisting law enforcement in recovering stolen vehicles sooner, identifying perpetrators faster, and preventing stolen cars from being used in other crimes.

The speed with which law enforcement can locate a carjacked vehicle plays an important role in how effective law enforcement can be in responding to carjackings and apprehending offenders. However, despite most newer vehicles being equipped with telemetry tools that can be used by the manufacturer to locate the vehicle, the complicated process of contacting vehicle manufacturers and accessing vehicle location tracking data often results in unnecessary delays that impact law enforcement's ability to effectively combat these crimes. The procedures for law enforcement agencies to access information from vehicle manufacturers vary widely across the auto industry, and accessing location tracking data from vehicle manufacturers can take law enforcement hours or even weeks. Without uniform industry procedures, law enforcement agencies often struggle to even reach the appropriate contact at a vehicle manufacturer to seek this data quickly. The information and verification that manufacturers require law enforcement to provide in order to access location data also vary widely.

The auto industry must do more to provide law enforcement with the tools they need to combat carjacking, and the Department of Transportation can play an important role in coordinating this effort. Promoting uniform industry procedures to make it easier for law enforcement to contact manufacturers and access valuable location data on stolen vehicles would be an important first step. I urge the Department to work with vehicle manufacturers and law enforcement to take this action, and I am prepared to support this effort any way I can.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dick Durbin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Richard J. Durbin  
Chair

cc: The Honorable Merrick Garland  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530