



## NEWS RELEASE

KidsAndCars.org

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### **SAFETY GROUPS SADDENED BY NEWS OF DETROIT CHILD STRANGLING IN POWER WINDOW**

**December 22, 2006, Washington, DC** - Two consumer safety groups KIDS AND CARS and Consumers Union – responding to yesterday’s power window strangulation death involving a 3-year-old Detroit girl - called on automakers to speed up adoption of safer power window switches. They also renewed their call for Congress to enact pending power window safety legislation that will require power windows automatically reverse if they hit an obstruction.

"The automakers have known for years that power windows can do grave harm - including strangling children," said Janette Fennell, founder and president of KidsAndCars.org. "That this tragic death occurred on a late model vehicle – a Pontiac, made by General Motors- is inexcusable."

Consumer and safety groups have been asking federal regulators, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, (NHTSA) for many decades to require automatic reverse mechanisms on power windows to prevent children from being strangled and others from being injured by powerful power windows. Installing anti-trap technology in all car power windows is proposed in bipartisan bills introduced in both the US House and Senate. (the Cameron Gulbransen Kids and Cars Act, HR 2230 and S.1948) In 2005, after efforts by safety groups, Congress passed legislation requiring power window switches be made safer to prevent injuries and death to children. That legislation has yet to go into effect.

"It's a terrible shame to see a child died in a totally preventable incident," said Sally Greenberg, Senior Product Safety Counsel. "We are reminded when incidents like these occur that we have much unfinished business in making cars safer for children and their families. We urge Congress to pass the Kids And Cars Safety Act and urge the automakers to take the initiative in designing safer cars with children as a paramount consideration."

Consumers Union, publisher of Consumer Reports, has in its files a letter written in 1968 by Ralph Nader notifying federal regulators that two children died in power window strangulations and asking the government to address the problem.

The federal government has not taken the appropriate actions to prevent the hazards identified by Mr. Nader. In a 1997 study, the federal highway safety agency found that nearly 500 people each year are admitted to hospital emergency rooms due to power window injuries.

Reports of this incident indicate the 3-year-old was not restrained in a car seat at the time of the incident. Both groups urge parents and caregivers to ensure that children are always properly restrained in the back seat.

Ms. Fennell reports that this incident represents at least the 6th fatality that KidsAndCars.org has added to their database in just over one week. "We send our condolences to all parents who have lost children, especially at this time of year.

Until vehicles are made safer for children, and Congress acts on the pending bills, families and communities will continue to suffer due to these most predictable and preventable tragedies," she added.

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**About KidsAndCars.org:** Founded in 1996, KidsAndCars.org is a national nonprofit child safety organization dedicated to preventing injuries and deaths of children in and around motor vehicles. KidAndCars.org promotes awareness among parents, caregivers and the general public about the dangers to children, including backover and frontover incidents, and heatstroke from being inadvertently left in a vehicle. The organization works to prevent tragedies through data collection, education and public awareness, policy change and survivor advocacy.