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November 16, 2023

SeungKyu (Sean) Yoon  
President & CEO  
Kia America  
111 Peters Canyon Road  
Irvine, CA 92606

José Muñoz  
President & CEO  
Hyundai Motor North America  
10550 Talbert Avenue  
Fountain Valley, CA 92708

Dear Mr. Yoon and Mr. Muñoz:

I write today on behalf of my constituents and local police departments who continue to grapple with a staggering number of Kia and Hyundai thefts. The skyrocketing number of stolen cars is the result of a longstanding security flaw that I urge your respective companies to step up efforts to address. While Kia and Hyundai have taken incremental steps to remedy the issue, motor vehicle thefts continue to occur to an unacceptable degree in my district and across the country. In addition to victimizing vehicle owners, the thefts put an inordinate burden on law enforcement who are already operating under limited resources. I urge you to take responsibility for the ongoing thefts and provide consumers and local police departments with the assistance they need to protect their vehicles.

In Peoria, Illinois, Kia and Hyundai thefts nearly doubled between 2023 and year-to-date in 2023. At the same time, stolen Kia and Hyundai models constitute a growing portion of all auto thefts and now account for most stolen vehicles in Peoria. In fact, thefts have become so commonplace, that two insurers announced earlier this year that they would no longer issue policies for certain Hyundai and Kia models in select states.<sup>1</sup>

For more than a decade, Kia and Hyundai models were designed and manufactured without engine immobilizers, a critical anti-theft device that is standard in most other vehicles. As a result, these models could easily be started with a screwdriver and USB drive, making the vehicles highly susceptible to theft. Customers and local police departments continue to pay the price for the automakers' decision to cut corners. How-to videos on TikTok and social media accelerated the trend of teenagers encouraging others to steal cars as a sport and has contributed to the number of thefts.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/state-farm-progressive-kia-hyundai-auto-insurance/>

While engine immobilizers are now standard on Hyundai models manufactured after November 2021, an estimated 9 million older models remain on the roads. While Kia and Hyundai have instituted theft prevention measures, which include free software updates and reimbursing consumers for steering wheel locks, it is unclear how many consumers have taken advantage of these offers.<sup>2</sup> However, it is clear that the thefts continue to pose a significant problem for vehicle owners and law enforcement. I applaud Hyundai's recently announced decision to stand up temporary anti-theft software service centers across the country at no cost to the consumer.<sup>3</sup> I encourage both Hyundai and Kia to assist local police departments and vehicle owners in my district to fullest extent possible.

In that spirit, I request Kia America, Inc. and Hyundai Motor North America provide responses to the following questions within 30 days of receiving this letter.

1. Can you give a status update on your efforts to distribute steering wheel locks to local police departments and car owners?
2. What efforts have you made to engage local police departments and vehicle owners in Central and Northwestern Illinois?
3. What are your plans to expand free software update clinics to regional dealerships and areas outside the five initial U.S. cities, including in Central and Northwestern Illinois?
4. What additional steps do you plan to take to address the rise in Kia and Hyundai auto thefts?

I urge your prompt attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Lawrence". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "L".

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/hyundai-kia-campaign-prevent-vehicle-theft>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.cbs58.com/news/kia-america-to-host-anti-theft-software-service-center-at-mayfair-mall?fbclid=IwAR3F8f5NCIXmkK0ybUJ9VWInIaD9wtGdNSZVITpLEF0b6uvuH3pPOLW75I\\_aem\\_ASNHW\\_GarXWcoN4d-LYNqUdVkMaXCAUxK3r1g2EnGI9aOhw1wYeDop9kNr1-e7Qt1SI&mibextid=Zxz2cZ](https://www.cbs58.com/news/kia-america-to-host-anti-theft-software-service-center-at-mayfair-mall?fbclid=IwAR3F8f5NCIXmkK0ybUJ9VWInIaD9wtGdNSZVITpLEF0b6uvuH3pPOLW75I_aem_ASNHW_GarXWcoN4d-LYNqUdVkMaXCAUxK3r1g2EnGI9aOhw1wYeDop9kNr1-e7Qt1SI&mibextid=Zxz2cZ)