



November 12, 2019

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

RE: Support for the Nicholas and Zachary Burt Memorial Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act

Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Cantwell:

On behalf of the broad constituencies represented by the undersigned organizations, we are writing to express support for the Nicholas and Zachary Burt Memorial Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act. This bipartisan legislation promotes the purchase and installation of carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in residential homes and dwelling units nationwide.

Please note that the House version of this legislation, H.R. 1618, passed that chamber unanimously on September 17, 2019. The House-passed version of H.R. 1618 includes broader recognition of and support for state CO poisoning prevention activities—compared to its original text and that of the Senate bill, S. 481—by recognizing state adoption and implementation of the International Fire Code (IFC) and International Residential Code (IRC). We support these changes and urge you to align S.481 with H.R. 1618 during the upcoming committee business meeting.

Carbon monoxide is a silent killer. Undetectable by human senses – you cannot see it, smell it or taste it - CO is the leading cause of accidental poisoning death in the United States. Often misdiagnosed or under-detected, CO poisoning induces symptoms that mimic those of the flu, with headache, nausea and dizziness being the most common. A CO alarm or detector is an inexpensive, effective way to warn

that a dangerous concentration of CO is present, which can occur whenever a fuel-burning appliance such as a furnace, water heater, stove, or generator malfunctions or is used improperly. Other common household sources of CO include fireplaces and vehicles left running in attached garages.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, each year approximately 430 Americans die from unintentional CO poisoning not linked to fires and more than 50,000 visit the emergency room.¹ Regrettably, many of these incidents could be prevented by properly installed and maintained alarm systems.

The need for detection and alarm is especially acute in homes, where people sleep and typically spend most of their time. Most states (as well as Puerto Rico and Guam) have enacted laws requiring CO detection in residential dwellings, and it is likely that more will adopt similar legislation or codes in the coming years. These measures – along with education efforts - have proven successful in reducing CO-related injuries and deaths, but laws alone do not guarantee that protection is in place wherever it is needed.

The Nicholas and Zachary Burt Memorial Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act will help states and local governments implement these programs and provide greater assurance that families are protecting themselves and their loved ones from CO. We are particularly encouraged by the bill's emphasis on facilities that serve children and the elderly, both of whom are especially susceptible to the effects of CO exposure. All schools should have proper CO detection systems in place, and we welcome federal support in this regard.

Each of the organizations listed herein contributes distinctly to public safety, residential security, and protection of vulnerable populations. By reducing the likelihood of CO poisoning in places where people gather, the Nicholas and Zachary Burt Memorial Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act also serve these objectives. We are pleased to endorse enactment of H.R. 1618 and S. 481, as amended to include the IFC and IRC provisions of H.R. 1618.

Please let us know how our organizations can assist you in advancing this worthwhile initiative.

Congressional Fire Services Institute
International Code Council
National Association of Home Builders
National Association of State Fire Marshals
National Electrical Manufacturers Association – Fire, Life Safety, Security & Emergency
Communications Product Section
National Fire Protection Association
Security Industries Association

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¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/features/copoisoning/index.html>

CC Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator John Hoeven
Senator Kevin Cramer
Senator Tina Smith