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Dear Member of Congress:

The Consumer Technology Association (CTA) urges you to oppose the AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act.

CTA has a unique perspective on this issue. We were founded in 1924 as the Radio Manufacturers Association. We understand the important role radio has played in American life. But a century later, Congress should not require every American buying a new car to pay for a specific technology simply because an incumbent industry wants the government to preserve its place in the dashboard.

We have opposed this mandate for years because it is unnecessary, increases costs, limits consumer choice and sets a troubling precedent for government-mandated technology.

Supporters increasingly justify the mandate as a public safety measure. If Congress is going to require a technology in every new vehicle on safety grounds, there should be clear evidence that it will meaningfully improve safety. That evidence has not been provided.

In CTA research following the nationwide Emergency Alert System test, just 1 percent of Americans who received the alert got it through AM radio, compared with 95 percent through their mobile phones. FEMA's emergency alert system is intentionally redundant, reaching Americans through wireless alerts, radio, television and other communications systems. AM radio is an outdated and increasingly unnecessary part of that system, not the system itself.

Broadcasters have also failed to demonstrate that AM stations are consistently staffed during emergencies or that Americans rely on AM radio as their primary source of emergency information. Congress should demand evidence before turning an industry preference into a federal mandate.

This is also about precedent. Vehicle safety mandates should address the safety of the vehicle itself, like seat belts, windshield wipers and rearview cameras. AM radio is different. The broadcasters' argument also breaks down when taken to its logical conclusion. If AM radio is so essential to public safety that the federal government must require it in every new car, why should that requirement stop with cars? The same logic would support requiring AM radios in every phone, laptop, home, school and office.

That is plainly not a sensible approach to public safety or technology policy. The better approach is to maintain a modern, redundant emergency communications system that reaches Americans through the technologies they actually use.

Broadcasters have previously sought government mandates for FM chips in phones and new tuners in television sets. Congress should not create a precedent in which an industry can turn declining consumer demand into a federal purchasing mandate.

Broadcasters already receive extraordinary treatment from Washington. They have long enjoyed access to valuable public spectrum on terms unavailable to many of their competitors, and terrestrial radio remains the major music platform that does not pay recording artists a performance royalty for the music it uses. Streaming services and satellite radio pay artists. AM and FM broadcasters do not.

Before Congress gives broadcasters yet another special favor by forcing every new-car buyer to purchase their product, it should address these glaring inequities. Broadcasters should not be able to repeatedly come to Washington for government protection while resisting the same marketplace rules that apply to their competitors.

The auto industry is moving rapidly toward autonomous, connected and electric vehicles. Congress should be removing barriers to innovation and strengthening American leadership, not hardwiring legacy technologies into the cars of the future.

Consumers, not Congress, should decide what technology belongs in their cars. Please oppose the AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act. At a minimum, Congress should demand a clear factual safety case before imposing a nationwide technology mandate on every new vehicle.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Shapiro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" and last name "Shapiro" clearly distinguishable.

Gary Shapiro
Executive Chair
Consumer Technology Association