



IMPROVING
CHILDREN'S
PRODUCT
SAFETY

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**Testimony before the Chicago City Council
Committee on Health and Environmental Protection
June 28, 2011
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Good Morning. My name is Sarah Chusid and I am the program director at Kids In Danger or KID. KID is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting children by improving children's product safety. Our mission is to promote the development of safer products, advocate for children and educate the public about dangerous children's products -- such as the crib bumper pads you are considering here today.

KID was founded in 1998 by the parents of Danny Keysar who was killed in a recalled portable crib in his licensed child care home in Lincoln Park. In forming KID, his parents made it their mission to prevent other tragedies such as the one they suffered.

One of the first people to approach Linda and Boaz, Danny's parents, was then Chicago Commissioner of Consumer Services, Caroline Shoenberger. Commissioner Shoenberger worked with KID and the City Council to pass the Secondhand Dealer's Ordinance to prevent the resale of recalled or dangerous products. Then as now, Chicago was a model for the rest of the nation in addressing product safety issues.

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In our educational materials and when talking to parents, KID has always warned against crib bumper pads. Any soft bedding in a crib or bassinet can cause suffocation. And older babies who can pull up to a stand, can use the bumper pads as footing to catapult out of the crib -- possibly facing severe injuries from a fall. While most deaths in cribs are caused by suffocation or entrapment, most non-fatal injuries come from falls.

When Dr. Bradley Thach published his research in 2007 in the Journal *Pediatrics*, we thought that would put an end to the use of crib bumper pads. Dr. Thach, of Washington University in St. Louis, found 27 deaths over a period of about a decade that were attributable to bumper pads -- where babies were found with their face or head against the bumper pad or wedged between the mattress and bumper pad. But unfortunately, crib bedding manufacturers and the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association, tried to discredit this doctor's research and promoted bumpers as a safe product for cribs.

We continued our efforts to warn parents about the dangers of using bumper pads. Then in early 2010, we were approached by two families that renewed our commitment to seeing this product off the market or at least to be sure all new parents were aware of the dangers.

In February 2010, Aiden suffocated against his crib bumper in Texas. We were contacted by his grandmother. She had purchased the bumper pads herself, led to believe they were part of a safe sleep environment and important to keep her grandson from injuring himself. Imagine her heartache after learning that the very thing she purchased thinking it would protect her beloved grandson ended up being what suffocated him as he slept. Tami Vanderwilt called us and anyone else she could think of to help in her crusade to warn other families. In fact, today as we speak, Aiden's grandmother is hiking the Appalachian Trail in honor of her little 'peanut' and to raise awareness of the dangers of bumper pads. Her journey is chronicled in her online blog.

Then we heard from the family of Preston Maxwell. Just eight weeks old, Preston slept on a sleep positioner in the middle of his crib. His distraught parents found him one morning – he had rolled off the sleep positioner and ended up with his face against the bumper pad. The US Consumer Product Safety Commission immediately after Preston's death (but 8 years after Andy Sage died in New York) issued a warning along with the FDA against the sleep positioner product – saying it was unnecessary AND dangerous. Today, almost all manufacturers have stopped making positioners and they are no longer widely in use.

Crib bumper pads, while cute perhaps, are also unnecessary and dangerous. They were developed when crib slats were far apart and there was a risk of a child slipping through, only to be caught by the neck and strangle. New cribs do not pose the same hazard. In fact, just today a new crib standard is effective nationwide – the strongest standards in the world. Older cribs that don't meet this new standard can't be sold – new or used – after today. So now we can say with confidence that the safest place for a baby to sleep is on his or her back, in a safe crib, with no bedding in the crib. We applaud the work our allies at SIDS of Illinois have done to spread the safe sleep message and we are honored to work with them. We must stop the use of crib bumper pads for our vulnerable babies. A bump or bruise of the leg or even head is nothing compared to the horror that Preston and Aiden's family and others like them face when they find a lifeless baby.

CPSC is now reviewing their data and will soon make their recommendations about crib bumper pads. KID and almost all other child safety groups warn against their use. We urge the City of Chicago take action. The use of crib bumper pads is already prohibited in child care facilities in Illinois and many other states. At the very least, we should make sure all of Chicago's families have the information on the hazards of crib bumpers and other soft bedding. KID is eager to help in any way we can and we thank you again for holding this hearing.