

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 24, 2020

Mary T. Barra
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
General Motors Company
300 Renaissance Center
Detroit, MI 48265

Jim Hackett
President and Chief Executive Officer
Ford Motor Company
One American Road
Dearborn, MI 48126

Mark Stewart
Chief Operating Officer, North America
Fiat Chrysler Automobiles United States LLC
1000 Chrysler Drive
Auburn Hills, MI 48326

Dear Mrs. Barra, Mr. Hackett, and Mr. Stewart,

We write to highlight the recent enactment of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, which contains a section with new requirements for automobile companies to protect the consumer rights of spouses of catastrophically injured and deceased American servicemembers. We encourage your companies to implement these protections for military spouses.

Section 545 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020¹ expands financial protections for military families' automobile leases by allowing the spouse of a servicemember who died while in military service to terminate such a lease, without penalty, one year from the date of the servicemember's death, as long as that servicemember died while in military service or while performing full-time National Guard duty, active Guard and Reserve duty, or inactive-duty training. In addition, this section allows the spouse of a servicemember who sustained a catastrophic injury or illness to terminate an automobile lease, without penalty, one year from the date of the catastrophic event, as long as that servicemember sustained the injury or illness while in military service or while performing full-time National Guard duty, active Guard and Reserve duty, or inactive-duty training.²

¹ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s/1790/BILLS-116s1790enr.pdf>.


² *Id.*

Military families can relocate frequently or suddenly as the result of a servicemember's military orders, and these moves can involve entering into an automobile lease. If a servicemember dies or sustains a catastrophic injury or illness during military service, his or her spouse may be forced to pay off the remainder of that lease or face a penalty for breaking the agreement. Military spouses should only have to focus on caring for the needs of injured servicemembers or their surviving dependents – not incur the burdensome costs associated with terminating an unnecessary or unwanted car lease. Other members of the automobile industry agree. Section 545 of the NDAA is the language of the bipartisan *Gold Star Spouses and Spouses of Injured Servicemembers Leasing Relief Expansion Act*, which we introduced in April.³ Shortly after the introduction of this bill, Toyota announced “a new program that waives the remaining lease payments for military customers who die or are catastrophically injured in the line of duty.”⁴ It is commendable when the private sector takes action to help military families, particularly when the law does not yet require it.

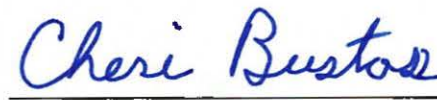
Fundamentally, military families are middle class families, and they make incredible sacrifices in service to our country. One way to honor those sacrifices is to ensure they have the support they need, including reasonable financial protections. Accordingly, we encourage your company to begin implementing the automobile leasing relief requirements of the FY 2020 NDAA.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress

³ Gold Star Spouses and Spouses of Injured Servicemembers Leasing Relief Expansion Act, S.1118, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1118/text>; Gold Star Spouses and Spouses of Injured Servicemembers Leasing Relief Expansion Act, H.R.2227, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2227/text>.

⁴ Toyota Financial Services, “Toyota Supports Gold Star Spouses and Families,” July 3, 2019, <https://pressroom.toyota.com/toyota-supports-gold-star-spouses-and-families/>.