

Statement of Clarence M. Ditlow

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SB 869 (Yee)

On Auto Repair and Airbag Safety

Before The

California Assembly Committee on Business, Professions and Consumer Protection

June 28, 2011

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the Opportunity to testify on SB 869, authored by Senator Leland Yee, to require a person who repairs an inflatable restraint (which includes an airbag) to restore it to its original operating condition. I am Clarence Ditlow, Executive Director of the Center for Auto Safety (CAS), nationally recognized consumer group founded by Ralph Nader and Consumers Union in 1970. SB 869 is supported by other consumer groups including the Trauma Foundation and Consumers Union, publisher of Consumer Reports.

Airbags save several thousands annually. But they can't save lives if they have not been repaired properly. Every year, about 1.5 million airbags are deployed in police-reported towaway crashes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). California has at least 150,000 airbag deployments every year. When the repairer fails to install a replacement airbag or installs it improperly, consumers can be killed in a crash.

SB 869 would strengthen current law by requiring auto repairers to repair and restore an inflatable restraint system including the airbag to its original operational condition where the repair is done for compensation. NHTSA found that 20% of all deaths in crashes caused by an airbag failing to deploy are due to the airbag not having been installed in a repair prior to the crash. The NHTSA study means that in 20% of all repairs involving airbag deployments, the airbag is not replaced. California has at least 30,000 repairs each year where a deployed airbag is not replaced. If the consumer is billed for the replacement and none is provided, the consumer loss can total over \$30 million each year because the average airbag replacement cost is more than \$1,000. If the repair is faulty, the effect is the same because the airbag is not ready to deploy in a crash

SB 869 imposes no additional costs for its implementation. Restoring inflatable restraint systems to their original operating condition will reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries in crashes in California and reduce the costs to society and the state for caring for vehicle occupants who have airbags to protect them as a result of SB 869.

SB 869 will save lives by ensuring airbag and inflatable restraint systems are repaired correctly. We urge the Assembly Business, Professions and Consumer Protection Committee to pass SB 869.