

Written by Kathy

Thursday, 09 March 2023 14:30 - Last Updated Saturday, 11 March 2023 15:51



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Mayor Justin M.Bibb says the city will use the full weight of the law to hold these manufacturers accountable

Wednesday, March 8, 2023 – CLEVELAND-Ohio – Yesterday afternoon, the City of Cleveland filed a lawsuit in federal court against car manufacturers Kia and Hyundai for their failure to install industry standard anti-theft technology in millions of their vehicles, which has contributed to an exponential increase of Kia and Hyundai car theft in Cleveland and other regions.

Between October and December 2022, a reported 1,203 Hyundai and Kia vehicles were stolen in Cleveland. For December alone, vehicle theft of Hyundais and Kias accounted for 65 percent of total vehicle theft in the city.

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"It is our position the Kia and Hyundai prioritized profit over people by not installing engine immobilizers in these vehicles," said Mayor Justin M. Bibb. "It is unacceptable for our city and our residents to bear the burden of this irresponsible and dangerous decision."

Studies by the Highway Loss data Institute regularly show that vehicle theft losses significantly decreased after the introduction of immobilizer devices. Despite this, only 26 percent of the 2015 vehicle series for Hyundai and Kia models were equipped with standard immobilizers, compared to 96 percent of all other makes combined.

The absence of engine immobilizers in certain Hyundai and Kia vehicles has made those vehicles incredibly susceptible to theft. Recently, this susceptibility led to a viral social media trend, where offenders post videos in Kia and Hyundai cars they stole using only a USB cable.

Although Kia and Hyundai were aware of the public safety concerns arising from the huge spike in theft of their vehicles, they have not taken meaningful steps to address this problem. As a result, the public is put at risk, and the Cleveland Police Department is saddled with the burdens of responding to the rampant theft of these vehicles and the consequent harms to people and property.

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"The increase in theft is nationwide, not just here in Cleveland. It is certainly causing a draw on our resources," said Cleveland Police Deputy Chief Harold Pretel.

Additionally, the City of Cleveland has expended substantial resources investigating, responding to, and prosecuting crimes related to these thefts. In January 2023, theft of Hyundai and Kia vehicles rose 622.22 percent compared to thefts of those same vehicles in January 2022.

With the assistance of the Seattle law firm Keller Rohrback L.L.P., the City is taking action to force Hyundai and Kia to do what's right—fix the cars and put an end to the crime wave that could have been prevented had they simply followed industry-wide standards and installed the anti-theft technology in the first place.

"I believe in standing up for working people," said Ward 13 Councilman Kris Harsh. "I appreciate the leadership of the mayor and law director on this lawsuit. My hope is that we can get relief for the owners of these vehicles and for our city."

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The City of Cleveland stands with consumers and other municipalities to hold Kia and Hyundai accountable for the public safety hazard they created, decrease vehicle theft in Cleveland, and alleviate the rising costs and burdens on the city and its taxpayers.

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