

March 25, 2025

Re: Testimony on House Bill 126

Dear Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the City of Cincinnati, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to write to you regarding House Bill 126 (HB 126).

Local law enforcement agencies would be left with little to no recourse in situations where manufacturers are not held to standards that inadvertently severely impact their already dwindling resources. The Cincinnati Police Department repeatedly seeks partnership opportunities to reduce unanticipated increases in certain types of crime against its citizens to maximize mitigation. Unfortunately, its ability to facilitate these partnerships with national and international companies is often hindered due to the size and corporate structures associated with major corporations. With already limited capacity, local law enforcement agencies are left in a reactive mode without the ability to problem-solve at the root of the issue, causing undue burden on officers and the public that fund their local departments. The severe impact on the citizens and public safety as a whole due to diverted investigative resources has already been insurmountable.

Attached, for example, is the most recent report containing data and analytics surrounding the Cincinnati Police Department's struggle to address the monumental increase in vehicle thefts of specific cars sold and distributed in the City of Cincinnati alone.

As the House Judiciary Committee continues its deliberations on HB 126, we encourage consideration of the impacts to local government efforts to promote public safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on HB 126, and we would appreciate your support.

Sincerely,



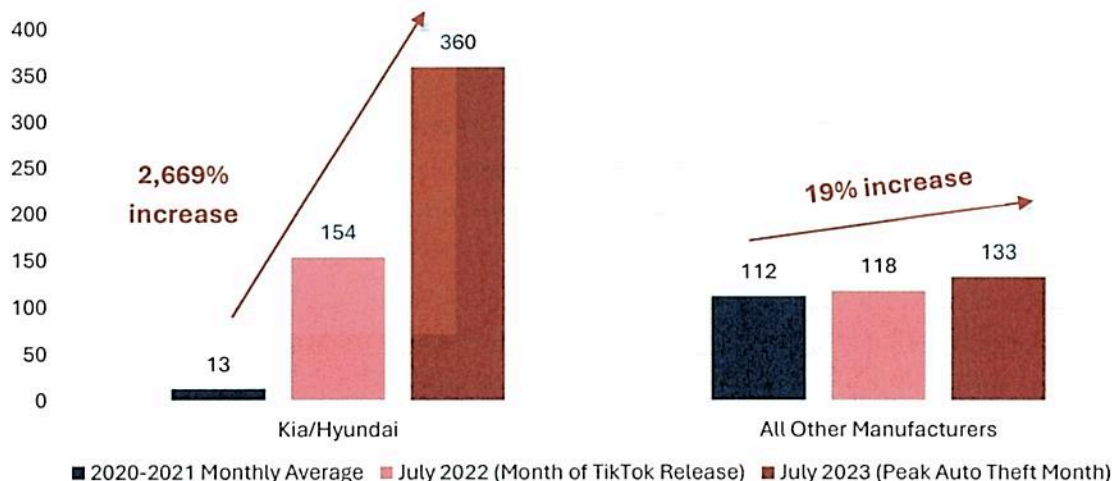
Colonel Teresa A. Theetge  
Police Chief

Attachments



The City of Cincinnati saw a dramatic increase in auto thefts after the release of a viral TikTok video, which demonstrated the vulnerability of specific KIA and Hyundai models and years. In the two years leading up to the viral TikTok video, Cincinnati was averaging 125 vehicles completed or attempted to be stolen per month, about 13 of which were a KIA or Hyundai model. Nearly all were not stolen without technical expertise, and instead had keys left in the console. In July 2022, the same month the viral video was posted, Cincinnati saw that count jump to 272 vehicles, over half of which were KIA or Hyundai models. At its peak (July 2023), the number of KIA/Hyundai vehicles involved in auto thefts increased by 2,669% when compared to the average monthly thefts between 2020-2021.<sup>1</sup> These thefts were not the result of misplacing keys, but rather the targeted exploitation of their internal vulnerability, the lack of inhibitor switch which prohibits a vehicle from running without keys.

Nearly two years after the original viral video, auto thefts in Cincinnati remain higher than before it was released, albeit lower than the July 2023 peak. Even in January 2025, there were still 195 auto thefts reported in Cincinnati, 121 (62%) of which were KIA or Hyundai models. Recall, counts hovered around 100 total vehicles stolen per month with only 10% being KIA/Hyundai before the video exposing the vulnerabilities went viral.



**Figure 1. Raw Change in Vehicles Involved in Auto Thefts during Key Time Points**

These calculations do not include officer time to process reports and crime scenes (over a 200% increase from 2022 to 2023), crashes involving a stolen KIA or Hyundai (over a 150% increase from 2022 to 2023), subsequent crimes committed with the stolen vehicle, time spent investigating, analyzing, working with and educating the community, and the time/effort it takes CPD's records division to process and assign incoming online reports.

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to make sense of percent changes above 100%. An equivalent percent change would be driving at speed of over 1800 mph (the approximate speed of a fighter jet) on a 70-mph highway.



### Top Vehicle Sales by Manufacturer in USA (2023) \*

1. Toyota (12%)
2. Ford (12%)
3. Chevrolet (11%)
4. Honda (7%)
5. Nissan (5%)
6. Hyundai (5%)
7. Kia (5%)
8. Jeep (4%)

Source: Car Pro; Note that different sources display different rank order, but generally follow this order

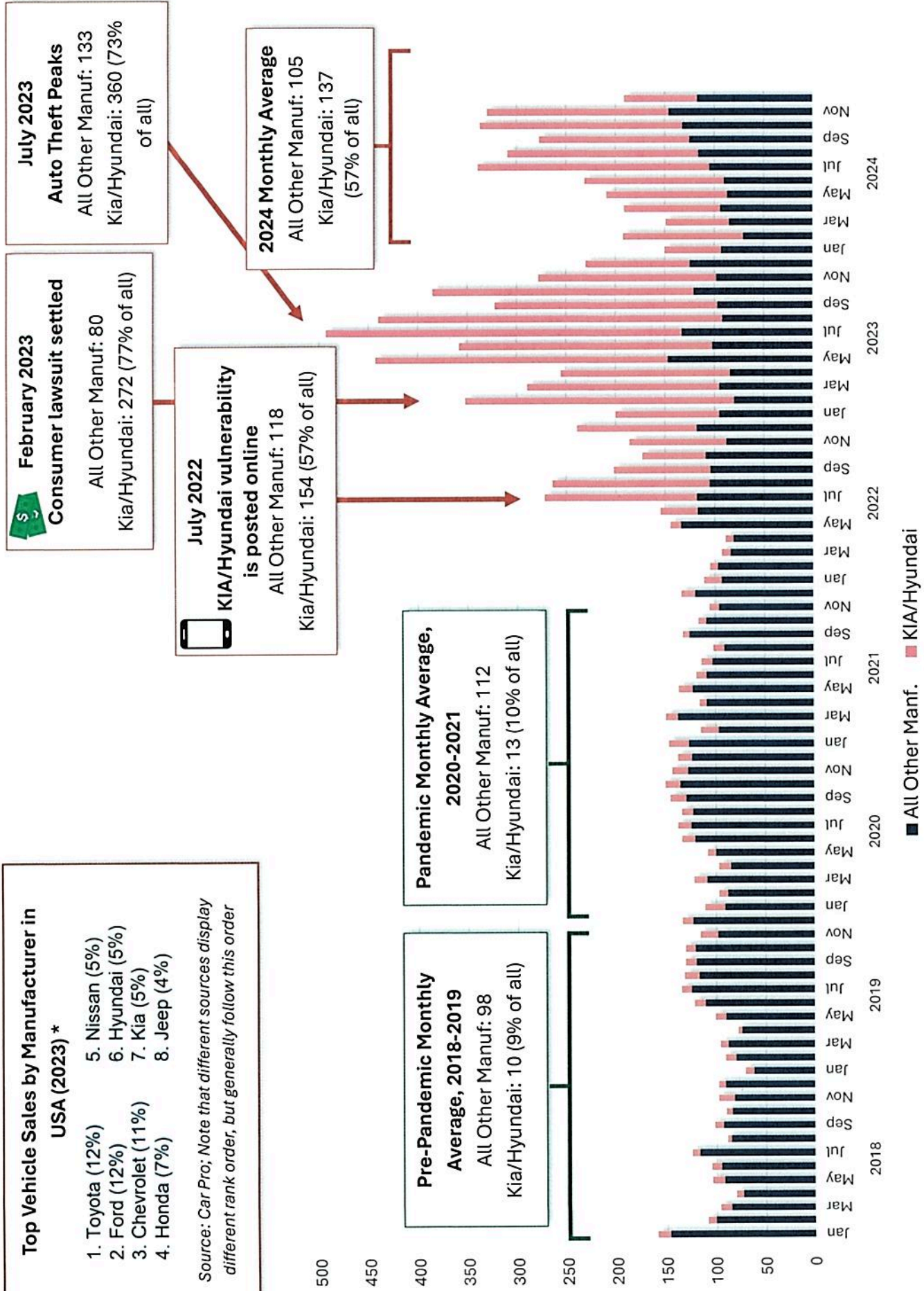


Figure 2. Number of Vehicles Involved in Reported Auto Thefts by Month; Cincinnati, 2018 - 2024