



ZACH KLEIN
COLUMBUS CITY ATTORNEY

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Contact: Pete Shipley, 614.965.0203
Email: pjshipley@columbus.gov

Columbus Files Lawsuit against Kia and Hyundai as Taxpayers Continue to Foot the Bill for Automakers' Negligence

City Attorney Zach Klein says automakers sold cars they knew were unsafe, which has cost taxpayers as City continues to respond to vehicle thefts, crime sprees associated with Kia and Hyundai security issues

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein today filed a lawsuit against automakers Kia and Hyundai as the City continues to respond to skyrocketing rates of thefts of certain Kia and Hyundai models that lack industry standard antitheft technology. Since January 2022, Kia and Hyundai models account for nearly two-thirds of all vehicle theft attempts in Columbus. Many of the vehicles, primarily stolen by a group of juveniles known as the “Kia Boyz,” have been used in dangerous and deadly joyrides and in furtherance of other crimes.

“The taxpayer cost of Kia and Hyundai’s negligence continues to rise as local law enforcement diverts limited resources to investigate thefts, respond to crimes and assess property destruction,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“It’s time we held these automakers accountable for cheating consumers and passing the buck and responsibility to clean up the mess they made onto the rest of us.”**

Since the viral social media trend began more than a year ago, Columbus has seen a dramatic, 400 percent increase in thefts of Kia and Hyundai models, with an average of 17 vehicles stolen every day. City Attorney Klein says this increase has strained Columbus police resources as officers compile reports, respond to crime scenes and are diverted from other duties as juveniles steal vehicles and dangerously joyride on city streets, posing a significant threat to public safety.

Since November 2022, the City has been engaged in discussions with Kia and Hyundai about the rising thefts and associated costs that have been put on car owners and cities as a result. City Attorney Klein has consistently stated that in order to prevent future damage and help individuals who own these cars, the automakers must provide a permanent security fix for affected vehicles at no cost to car owners. On Tuesday, the automakers announced that certain models would soon be eligible for a no-cost security fix.

“For months, the City of Columbus has been in conversation with Kia and Hyundai about how the ease of stealing some of their cars has wreaked havoc in communities across the country. Since November 2022, I’ve said that the automakers must come up with a no-cost fix to prevent future harm both to car owners and cities alike,” said City Attorney Klein.

“I commend Kia and Hyundai for heeding our call and providing a no-cost security fix for drivers, but unfortunately a lot of damage has been done. The fact remains that thousands of Columbus residents have already had their cars stolen and our law enforcement continues to divert significant time and resources to respond to these crimes. We have no choice but to file a lawsuit to hold these multinational corporations accountable for this significant and rising cost to taxpayers.”

In their lawsuit, the City of Columbus contends that the rash of Kia and Hyundai thefts due to substandard security features in their vehicles have cost consumers, insurance companies, local governments, and law enforcement millions of dollars over the past year alone.

Columbus contends that Kia and Hyundai have intentionally and consciously manufactured, marketed, and sold vehicles that lacked sufficient, industry-standard security features, including engine immobilizers and certain other safety and anti-theft systems, which can easily be stolen in a matter of seconds with simple tools and a USB charger. The City has spent significant resources investigating and responding to these thefts, and the City’s residents have to deal with the problems of juveniles and others illegally joy riding on Columbus streets and highways.

The City is asking the court to compel Kia and Hyundai to alleviate the cost of damages sustained by the City as it responds to sky-high rates of theft as security deficiencies due to the automakers’ negligence continue to be exploited.

[A copy of the City’s filing is attached.](#)

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