



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202 • www.city.milwaukee.gov

June 16, 2021

Jang Won Sohn
KIA Motors America Inc.
111 Peters Canyon Rd
Irvine, CA 92606

Dear Mr. Sohn:

We write to ask that KIA Motors America Inc., make fundamental changes to the mechanisms used to secure its vehicles. We do this not only in the interest of protecting the property and persons of those who purchase your vehicles, but to try and do something to lessen the drain on police and other resources that seems directly attributable to certain defects in their locking system.

We recently asked our police department to review what we perceived to be a spike in vehicle theft. The results were disturbing. To date in 2021, the number of thefts has increased 181% over the same period in 2020. This spike began in November 2020 and was almost immediately associated by police officials with automobiles manufactured by your company and one other. Vehicles manufactured by your two companies have accounted for 66% of those stolen in 2021 – a number wildly out of proportion with their presence in this city.

Anecdotally, local news reports have said your vehicles are being so frequently stolen that there is now a significant delay in locating parts to repair them. What may well be worse, though, is that the median age of those arrested for vehicle theft in the period May 24, 2020, through May 24, 2021 – a period largely contiguous with this surge in thefts -- was 18 years old.

For all these reasons, we ask that you let us know what your company is doing now and will do in the future to better secure the vehicles you produce. As a city, we have been driven to offering free steering wheel locks to anyone who can prove they own one of your cars. Surely this is not the reputation you want to build in communities like ours throughout the country.

Why your vehicles are so frequently stolen is variously attributed in the literature we were able to review, but concern seems to center on the ability of thieves to operate them without a key fob. There are some on social media claiming your vehicles can be stolen with nothing more than a USB cable. This is, of course, a subject in which your expertise is greater than ours and this is why your input – and your action – is so badly needed.

We look forward to hearing from you in the very near future.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Milele A. Coggs in cursive.

Milele A. Coggs,
Alderswoman, 6th District

Handwritten signature of Khalif J. Rainey in cursive.

Khalif J. Rainey,
Alderman, 7th District