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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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June 16, 2021

Ald. Milele A. Coggs  
(414) 286-2994  
Ald. Khalif J. Rainey  
(414) 286-2863

## **Council members ask auto makers KIA and Hyundai to build vehicles with more effective anti-theft systems**

Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs and Alderman Khalif J. Rainey have sent formal letters to the heads of vehicle manufacturers KIA and Hyundai, urging them to bolster their anti-theft systems so as to make their models harder to steal.

In the nearly identically-worded letters (sent today, Wednesday, June 15), the Council members note the jump in frequency with which the KIA and Hyundai models are stolen in the City of Milwaukee, according to the Milwaukee Police Department and backed up by posts on social media.

The letters (**attached**) state, in part: “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.”

Alderwoman Coggs said she has learned anecdotal information that the KIA and Hyundai models targeted by thieves are – for various reasons - easier to steal.

“Social media videos exposing car thieves or those who hunt them make what our city is going through seem unreal. KIA and Hyundai owners have been under siege, and too many of our neighborhoods, streets and sidewalks have been filled with the reckless behavior of those driving these stolen vehicles,” Alderwoman Coggs said.

**-More-**

## **Letters to KIA and Hyundai/ADD ONE**

“As the manufacturers of these vehicles they owe it to their customers to fix the problems that help make these brands of vehicles easier to steal,” she said.

Alderman Rainey said KIA and Hyundai bare some measure of responsibility for the rash of stolen vehicles in the city since 2020 – and the destruction and danger to public safety that comes with the city-wide problem. “Because of the defective locking systems in these vehicles, we as a city have been offering steering wheel locks to people who can prove they own one of the vehicles in question,” he said.

“KIA and Hyundai are directly responsible, in my view, for the drain on police and other city resources that have been sadly directed to deal with the rash of vehicle thefts and the havoc those thefts have brought to our city,” Alderman Rainey said. “It’s time for these companies to fix the problem they created.”

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CITY OF MILWAUKEE

City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202 • [www.city.milwaukee.gov](http://www.city.milwaukee.gov)

June 16, 2021

HYUNDAI  
Kurt Beyerchen, Jr., CIPP/US  
Senior Counsel, Privacy and Cybersecurity  
M 651 229 9696

Dear Mr. Beyerchen, Jr:

We write to ask that Hyundai Motor America 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 black ink.

Milele A. Coggs,  
Alderswoman, 6<sup>th</sup> District

Handwritten signature of Khalif J. Rainey in black ink.

Khalif J. Rainey,  
Alderman, 7<sup>th</sup> District