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## **Grieving Parents speak out about the Window Covering Manufacturers Association's "Best for Kids" Program**

St. Louis, MO.— As mothers across the nation make summer vacation plans for their kids, those mothers who have lost a child to blind cord asphyxiation are grieving their own loss while worrying about the future safety of other children. On May 8<sup>th</sup> the Window Covering Manufacturers Association (“WCMA”) announced a new “Best for Kids” voluntary certification program for window coverings. The WCMA program will mark boxes that don’t have dangerous accessible cords as “BEST for Kids”.

Parents for Window Blind Safety (“PFWBS”) applauds any effort to enhance child safety, with respect to window covering products, especially the large issue of consumer confusion in the market place. In retail stores today many products with dangerous cords are labeled with stickers that say ‘child safe device installed’ or ‘child safety tassels installed’ giving consumers a false sense of security.

For the past 12 years, PFWBS, a 501 c3 Non-Profit, independent of the Industry, has educated the nation on window covering safety. Through their ‘Go Cordless’ program, manufactures are awarded a Seal of Approval on products that pass strict guidelines. The PFWBS “Go Cordless” program is a financially unbiased, third party certification program that ensures products are free from cords kids can wrap around the neck.

“As a mother who lost her child to a senseless roman shade cord accident, I wish I had known that cordless window coverings were the only truly safe option for my home. After careful evaluation of WCMA’s “Best for Kids” program, I personally feel it will do little more than add further confusion to the marketplace regarding what is truly safest for children.” said Erica Barnes Thomas, who lost her son last March.

In May 2013, Parents for Window Blind Safety, and eight other organizations and groups petitioned the Consumer Product Safety Commission (“CPSC”) to develop a mandatory standard that asks for products to be manufactured without outer pull cords, or by having cords covered by a ridged device so kids can’t wrap cords around their necks. The petition was granted in October 2014, and the Commission voted unanimously to address the serious hazards of window covering cords.

Erin Shero, whose son died in 2013, thinks this move will confuse consumers more. “A cordless certification program has been in effect, in the United States for over a decade, so recreating the wheel seems fruitless. However, I hope that, at some point, WCMA begins to understand the importance of a unified message to consumers.

By contrast, WCMA’s self governing program will label qualifying products, “Best for Kids”, while promoting other hazardous products as ‘safe’ that have the potential to strangle kids. By doing this, consumer confusion regarding what is truly child-safe, with respect to window covering safety, will continue to exist.

Although the “Best for Kids” program is an effort to educate, the nation will continue to be flooded with hundreds of products manufactured each year with long cords that entangle children in seconds. A mandatory rule is desperately needed to effectively save the lives of future children in the United States.

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