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Contact:
Rachel Weintraub, CFA 202-387-6121
Linda Kaiser, PFWBS (314) 494-7890
Carol Pollack-Nelson, ISC (301) 340-2912
Nancy Cowles, KID (312) 595-0649

Retailers Cut the Cord for Kids

PFWBS, CFA, KID & ISC Applaud Decreasing Access to Corded Window Coverings and Urge Stronger Standards to Protect Children

Washington D.C.— Today Parents for Window Blind Safety, Consumer Federation of America, Kids In Danger and Independent Safety Consulting advise parents and grandparents who are shopping for window coverings to only purchase products that are cord-free and safe for homes with young children.

Since 1983, 12 children have died each year and many more suffered permanent brain injuries from strangling in window covering cords. The rate of injuries and deaths has not been significantly reduced since the hazard was first identified in 1983¹. These deaths and injuries involve children who are 8 years old and younger. Infants, toddlers, as well as school-age children have been harmed by cords on window coverings.

The problem is that industry's "safety standard" for how window coverings are designed actually allows products sold in the U.S. to have accessible, hazardous cords. These cords pose a serious strangulation risk to children, infants and toddlers who sleep and play near them.

Parents are advised to look for and purchase cordless window treatment options – a task made easier as a number of retailers have stopped selling corded window coverings in their stores or online. IKEA and Target stopped selling corded window coverings in 2015. Most recently, we applaud SelectBlinds.com, an online window coverings retailer, for only selling cord-free window coverings beginning March 31, 2016. SelectBlinds.com is the first retailer to stop selling corded custom window covering products.

"The tragic deaths and serious injuries caused by cords on window coverings compel action by manufacturers, retailers and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission," stated Rachel Weintraub, legislative director and general counsel at Consumer Federation of America. "We urge retailers to take bold action like SelectBlinds.com, Target and IKEA to stop selling corded products,

¹ CFA 2011 Press Release. <http://www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/WindowCoveringsStandardPressRelease.pdf>

we urge manufacturers to stop making corded products and we urge the CPSC to push for a strong standard to address the strangulation risk posed by corded window coverings.”

“We respect SelectBlinds.com for taking this step to protect children. Their decision to #GoCordless for custom products should indicate the urgency to remove unsafe corded hazardous products from homes. Thus is vital to save the lives of children in the United States and Canada,” stated Linda Kaiser, founder and president of Parents for Window Blind Safety. Linda Kaiser and her husband Matt formed Parents for Window Blind Safety in 2002, after their daughter, Cheyenne Rose, died as a result of being strangled by a window blind cord.

Carol Pollack-Nelson, Ph.D. of Independent Safety Consulting stated, “Families who purchase SelectBlinds.com and blinds from other retailers that have gone cordless can be assured that their children can live, play and sleep near window coverings without the risk of strangulation. The proactive action by SelectBlinds.com demonstrates that this can be done. Retailers and manufacturers who still sell window coverings with hazardous cords – either in stores or on line – put their customers at an unnecessary peril. They also put themselves at risk for liability since this hazard is well-established and preventable.”

“Deaths and injuries from corded window coverings are preventable,” stated Nancy Cowles, Executive Director of Kids In Danger (KID). “But until all retailers remove corded products from store shelves and online shopping sites, parents who are unaware of the hazard will unknowingly put their children in danger. We applaud those retailers who have already taken that step.”

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Consumer Federation of America is an association of nearly 300 nonprofit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education.

Parents for Window Blind Safety is a non profit organization that supports parents whose children have been seriously injured or killed by dangerous cords, educates consumers about the dangers of accessible window covering cords, helps create safer standards in the industry, encourages innovation of safer products in the industry, and tests window covering products for safety.

Kids In Danger (KID) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting children by improving children’s product safety. KID’s mission is to promote the development of safer products, advocate for children and educate parents and caregivers about dangerous children’s products.

Carol Pollack-Nelson, Ph.D. is a human factors psychologist and an independent safety expert advocating for cord-free window coverings.