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September 29, 2022

Mary Barra
Chair and CEO
General Motors
300 Renaissance Center
Detroit, MI 48243

Dear Ms. Barra:

Hexavalent chromium (Cr(VI)) is a known carcinogenic chemical that should have no role in American manufacturing. This letter is being sent to call on your company to take serious and immediate actions to improve the manufacturing supply chains General Motors has established to build its vehicles and, moving forward, to only engage with environmentally responsible suppliers. The continued use of hexavalent chromium, or other hazardous chemicals, threaten long-term public health and the environment, as well as empowers bad corporate actors.

As you know, hexavalent chromium has long been used in the decorative chrome plating process for automotive parts to increase hardenability and corrosion resistance. But we have known for over two decades now that hexavalent chromium is toxic. In 1998, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducted a toxicologic review of hexavalent chromium and found it to cause cancer and negatively impact reproductive and developmental health¹. While most of the known exposure comes through inhalation there is growing scientific evidence that the consumption of drinking water polluted with hexavalent chromium can also contribute to harmful health effects, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry².

Since learning of the harms hexavalent chromium presents, the world has largely been phasing out its use in industrial hard chrome plating and shifting to safer, commercially available alternatives like trivalent chromium. Adopting these safer chemicals will not only improve products, it will improve working conditions and protect communities and the local environment for future generations.

¹ "Toxicological Review of Hexavalent Chromium." *U. S. Environmental Protection Agency*, August 1998. https://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/iris/iris_documents/documents/toxreviews/0144tr.pdf. Accessed 26 Sept. 2022.

² "ToxFAQsTM for Chromium." *Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry*, 28 Sept. 2016. <https://www.cdc.gov/TSP/ToxFAQs/ToxFAQsDetails.aspx?faqid=61&toxid=17>. Accessed 26 Sept. 2022.

I applaud the progress the automotive industry has made in eliminating hexavalent chromium in hard plating, unfortunately, the industry has largely still failed to address hexavalent chromium in decorative plating. On August 1, 2022, we learned of reports of a major hexavalent chromium release near the Huron River watershed from Tribar Technologies Inc., an automotive plating company, located in Wixom, Michigan. While most of the contamination was captured before it could make its way into the environment this could have been a major environmental disaster and the State of Michigan continues to conduct sampling out of an abundance of caution. According to reports, however, it is my understanding that Ford, General Motors, Stellantis, Toyota, and other companies currently use Tribar Technologies, Inc., which uses hexavalent chromium in its manufacturing process, as a supplier. This is unacceptable.

Not only is Tribar Technologies, Inc. responsible in this instance, the company also has a long history of harmful environmental pollution. For instance, it is one of the main companies responsible for the contamination of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) found in the Huron River—and we know the use of hexavalent chromium typically requires the use of PFAS mist suppressants. This alarming event has reinforced the need for the automotive industry to act immediately to not only remove hexavalent chromium from its supply chains, but the industry must also take meaningful steps to review the actions of its current and future suppliers to ensure they are meeting strong environmental and public health safety standards. Additionally, automotive companies must continually monitor the suppliers they have contracts with for any environmental violations and have zero tolerance when future violations take place. Strong, respectable American companies should hold their suppliers to the same caliber as their own standards.

Michigan put the world on wheels and remains the home and leader of the global automotive industry. With this leadership comes an important responsibility to lead by example on all fronts of the business. I applaud General Motors' commitment to sustainability and the investments the company is deploying to help make the transformational shift to electrifying across the transportation sector, which represents 30 percent of U.S. carbon emissions. As you innovate and develop the vehicles of the future to help us meet our climate goals, it is equally important for automotive companies to also ensure its supply chains and manufacturing processes are meeting strong environmental standards as well.

Thank you for your attention in this important public health and environmental matter in the automotive manufacturing supply chain. It is time for all automotive manufacturers to publicly commit to ending their use of hexavalent chromium and to strengthen their manufacturing supply chains long-term by only contracting with environmentally responsible suppliers. Failing to do so unnecessarily endangers workers, endangers public health, and endangers our wildlife and environment across Michigan and the United States.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress