PREPARED TESTIMONY OF

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION

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Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to address you today. My name is Shinichi Sasaki and I am an Executive Vice President of Toyota Motor Corporation, where I am responsible for quality assurance and customer service.

In my testimony, I will outline the significant ways in which Toyota is changing its approach to customer safety in light of the lessons we have learned from our recent recalls.

We are redoubling our commitment to always put our customers – and their safety – first. We are also giving our people in North America a greater role in the quality assurance process, including recalls. And we are communicating more openly and more transparently with U.S. safety regulators and consumers.

Toyota has rigorously tested the solutions for our recent recalls and we are confident that with the repairs our dealerships are making, Toyota vehicles are among the safest on the road today. However, as we look to the future, we need to ensure that we listen more closely to our customers' voices, consider their concerns seriously and sincerely, and address them more quickly and aggressively.

To accomplish this, we are fundamentally overhauling Toyota's quality assurance process, under the personal direction of our President, Akio Toyoda. This overhaul will cover the entire quality assurance process -- from vehicle planning and design to manufacturing, sales and service.

In the design stage, we previously had been focused on technical and regulatory considerations. However, we need to do more to consider customer expectations and real world usage of our vehicles, even irregular use. We need to focus even more on customer behavior, and reduce the number of things we ask our customers to do correctly. While quick and accurate recall decisions are important, so too are the steps we can take to prevent such events during our quality assurance process. Therefore, we will intensify our focus on "safety design" and the principle of "preventing any harm during the full vehicle life."

With regard to customer service, we will build a better network to collect consumer information in a more timely manner at the site, in the tradition of Genchi Genbutsu – or "go and see." In the United States, we will establish additional technical branches in several cities. This will reinforce our local customer service and allow us to deploy "SWAT teams" of technicians to make on-site inspections of reported incidents of unintended acceleration as quickly as possible. To make this activity more useful, we will not only use EDR data but improve our vehicle diagnostic tools. All of this will put us in a better position to address quality issues more promptly and accurately.

With regard to recalls, in order to help us make timely and appropriate decisions, we will share global field information by allowing each regional staff to access to our quality network globally. Although each country's staff was previously well involved in field data collection and analysis, as well as the process for considering possible action, their authority for decision- making was neither clear nor formalized. For the future, our U.S. staff will have a clear decision-making role. Ultimately, our goal is for the United States to have an even greater voice in decisions on recalls and other safety and satisfaction issues.

The quality and safety of our vehicles are Toyota's lifeline. I will do my utmost to make sure that our vehicles remain among the safest and most reliable in the world by leading and training all Toyota quality and safety personnel in the United States and all other areas.

Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, Members of the Committee, these important actions reflect Toyota's unwavering commitment to restoring the reputation for quality that our company has built in the United States over more than half a century.

We look forward to working with NHTSA, and with Congress, to advance our shared goal of improved road safety for drivers and the general public.

Thank you.