

July 14, 1970

Mrs. L. W. Napp
236 Fairfield Road
Avon Lake, Ohio 44012

Dear Mrs. Napp,

Thank you for your letter of June 28, 1970, which was just forwarded to me by The Washington Post.

A letter like yours helps to bring home to me the heartfelt human meaning of some of the issues with which I deal rather abstractly in my column. I am glad to know that your child was saved and that that nightmare is sufficiently far behind you that you can address the underlying problems in more general terms.

In the long run it is precisely the consciousness of people like yourself that must be aroused in order to establish the policies and the understanding to pay the costs of vital improvements in consumer products on the one hand and facilities for health care on the other.

I do not think the problem is one of "persuading manufacturers" unless we can also get the necessary information to a high degree of visibility in the market place, so that the consumer can make an intelligent choice that takes safety and reliability as well as price into account. We do need enforceable standards that will put all competing manufacturers on a fair basis of effective performance. I would also advocate, to meet more general problems as they arise in this area, the invogoration of consumer groups along the lines indicated in my most recent column of which I enclose a copy.

The best way to get change on behalf of consumer needs is through congressional action. There is already a vast amount of interest in questions like fire safety of fabrics, but this is not always matched by effective appropriations to back up the legal mandate. I also enclose some material that may be illuminating to you on this subject. So, in the last analysis you must inform yourself and you must then instruct your congressman how they can best respond to your requirements as a constituent. I am sure that a letter like yours addressed to your own representative and senators would have at least as much impact as the most learned paper that could be transmitted to them.

Sincerely yours,

Enclosures
JL/rr

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics