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December 12, 2006

Nissan Reference: File # 5561791

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in the hopes that Nissan North America will do something to remedy the ongoing problems I've had with my 2002 Nissan Altima 2.5 SL, operating with the 4-cylinder engine. My vehicle's VIN number is as follows: 1N4AL11DX2C [REDACTED] I purchased this vehicle from Regal Nissan in Huntsville, Alabama in late May of 2003 with approximately 7,000 miles on it. I was pregnant with my first child at the time, and decided that my Toyota Celica would not provide enough room for a car seat, and would prove to be inconvenient. Although I never experienced problems with my Celica and adored the car, I ultimately decided that I needed more space.

My first vehicle was a Nissan Sentra, which I received as a gift for my 16th birthday. My father being a car enthusiast, he purchased the Sentra for me after much research, and ultimately, as a result of his confidence that I would be driving a vehicle that was extremely safe and dependable. That same year, my father died of lung cancer. Unfortunately, in 2003, I no longer had him to consult regarding what type of vehicle to purchase. Because I recalled his confidence in the Nissan brand, this brand became my choice when the time came to purchase a vehicle that would accommodate my growing family.

As my due date was quickly approaching, we visited the only Nissan dealership in Huntsville (Regal Nissan), with the Altima being the vehicle I wanted to purchase. They happened to have a Certified Pre-Owned Altima, loaded with leather, a Bose system, alarm, etc. I didn't wish to buy a brand-new vehicle due to depreciation, so I was impressed with the low mileage of the Altima I ultimately purchased. I took the vehicle for a test drive, and was impressed by the interior, the room in the backseat, and the manner in which the vehicle handled.

Only the week before this, I recall reading an article about countless dealerships taking unknowing customers for a ride, so to speak, by purchasing flooded vehicles that insurance companies had deemed totaled, and reselling the vehicles to consumers for an enormous profit. Because of this knowledge, I probed the salesman countless times about this. I questioned why the vehicle had such low mileage, and wasn't a demo. He assured me time and again that they would never sell such a vehicle. He informed me that the previous owner had traded the vehicle in for a Mercedes. Although I had a somewhat eerie feeling about the validity of such a statement, I decided to trust the man. Now I wonder if I did indeed purchase one of these totaled cars, a victim of flooding, and do wonder if I was a victim of this fraudulent scam. After much negotiation on price, I did buy the car. I was 24-years old, and this was the most expensive vehicle I had ever purchased, costing almost twice as much as my Celica. This was a long-term investment to me, and one that I did not take lightly. Looking back, as hindsight is 20/20, I realize I was practically robbed. I paid almost what I would've paid for a brand new Altima – so much for new-car depreciation. However, I liked the car, was tired, had a baby on the way any day, and knew that it was time to get something and make a decision. I have regretted this decision for years now, as I've had continuous problems with my car for years, and the dealership has done NOTHING to remedy the recurring problems.

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During these years, I had a job which required me to travel daily, several hundred miles per week. Of course, I received expense reimbursement, for wear and tear and depreciation, and because of this, I had my oil changed religiously every 3,000 miles. This often meant changing the oil once a month. My father taught me to do so from an early age, to protect and extend the life of the vehicle. The gentleman who sold me the extended warranty at Regal Nissan stated that I wouldn't ever have a single problem with my car if I changed the oil every 3,000 miles. I spent some \$600 on an extended warranty. Oh, how wrong this gentleman proved to be.

The car proved dependable for a few months, but I began having issues with the car. Little more than a year after I purchased the vehicle, problems ensued. I noticed that the car lost power. The car hesitated when driving, when accelerating, etc. The power that I remembered while test-driving my car seemed to have disappeared. It seemed the car had to work extra hard to do anything and everything, from accelerating to going up hills to even starting first thing in the mornings. Sometimes the car would not start at all. On several occasions, the car stopped while in operation. One time it did this when I was at a red light on a very steep hill. My power steering locked up, and I barely missed a collision with the car in front of me, as the car was sliding downhill, and all was locked up. The most frightening occurrence took place when I was in the middle of a major intersection, one of the largest in Huntsville, and my car simply stalled, with no warning, in the middle of the intersection. Cars swerved to miss me. There were many close-call accidents, both involving my car, and involving numerous other cars, as it was a busy time of day, at one of the busiest intersections in the city. Cars almost hit me, and my baby was with me, and likely would've been killed had an accident occurred. I could've been killed also. After a few minutes, the car started up again, but this was a scary experience, and left me feeling uneasy about the vehicle. The service engine light came on, and went off, a number of times, and I took the vehicle to the dealership for inspection.

The first visit to the dealership occurred in August 2004. At that time, I was informed that the issue was an electrical one, and also a recall issue, and they quickly rattled off something about O2 sensors, heat shields, and crank position sensors. My car was part of two recalls. The heat shield recall date was 3/11/03. Instead of repairing this problem prior to selling me the vehicle in late May of 2003, the dealership chose to ignore it. This problem went unchecked for some 45,000 miles, undoubtedly causing damage to my vehicle, through absolutely no fault of my own. I knew nothing of these things, had not been notified of a recall, and had been driving with these problems for 10's of thousands of miles, with no knowledge of the recalls. I am certain, as are mechanics with whom I've since spoken, that irreparable damage had been caused to my vehicle by that time as a result of driving it without knowledge of the recalls, due to my not being notified of them. The problems were supposedly resolved after that visit to the dealership, but the lack of power continued. My car did not have the get-up-and-go and spunk that it had previously possessed – not even close.

I continued driving the car, as this was my only option. I had too much money invested in it at the time (including cash down payment and depreciation) to consider getting another vehicle, and I owed more than the car was worth. The car's performance continued to decline, but the dealership shoved my concerns aside, and treated me with disregard and nonchalance. The car stalled over the course of the next eight months while in operation, often in the middle of nowhere, with no cell phone reception. I could

have been in harm's way countless times, and this was frightening. I quite frankly could not believe that I was having this many problems with a car I purchased almost brand-new. There were just too many problems for me to dismiss them as normal. Cars these days are supposed to last for a decade (or several) if they are well-maintained. My attention to my car's maintenance was unfaltering and relentless. My vehicle's performance continued to weaken, rattling occurred upon cold-starts, and when trying to get enough power to just make it up a hill or change gears. I felt as if I were driving a clunker that was susceptible to breaking down at any moment. The car had also begun consuming oil, and I often had to add oil to the vehicle even before my 3,000 mile oil change was due. I checked the oil almost weekly, and my husband added oil as needed when I was taking trips of any distance. I never went anywhere without extra quarts of oil in my trunk. I again returned the car to the dealership in May of 2005, with the same problems and issues, the same complaints. The "Service Engine Soon" light came on, the car stalled, the power wasn't there. I went back to Regal Nissan with the hope that they would once and for all return the car to its original condition and state of performance. This visit proved even more frustrating than the prior one.

The mileage at the time of the next visit was 80,935. The mileage at the visit eight months prior was 52,516. The dealership stated that there was still an issue with the exhaust, which is related to the main catalyst. The engine code was also reading manifold/catalyst. I asked how I could be experiencing the same problem as before, and they said that it must've been a faulty part that was installed when I brought the car back before – a faulty part. I found it interesting that this was their immediate path and "answer". They didn't offer the possibility that my car had sustained more intense damage than perhaps they wished to divulge due to the recall issues, and the time that had transpired before the problem was initially addressed. They didn't wish to consider that perhaps they hadn't fully corrected the issues beforehand. They didn't wish to consider that perhaps a laborer in their shop had "overlooked" problems that were much more costly than a 200 dollar part, more or less. My vehicle at this time was 935 miles over the extended warranty I had purchased. As the problems were related to my previous visit, the dealership did a "3-way split". The warranty persons paid for 1/3, the dealership paid for 1/3, and I had to pay for 1/3 – my portion was close to 250 dollars. I had to argue, beg, and plead to get the dealership to even make this concession, if one could call it that. They stated that this was a favor, although this was still a recall issue, one that hadn't been fully addressed previously, and one that was never solved with full attention to detail, and I believe the repair shop at Regal intentionally hid the extent of the problems at hand. I shouldn't have had to pay a dime for this work. By this time, Nissan was aware of the problems with the engine that my car contained, more specifically the 2002 4-cylinder engines with which the Altimas were equipped. I was even told that had I only purchased an Altima with a V6, or better yet, a Maxima, I wouldn't have experienced any of these problems. Funny no one told me that in the beginning when that salesman was so eager to get Employee of the Month so he could take his kids to Disneyworld.

I left the dealership again, assured by its employees yet again that my car would without question be back to operating at its peak performance. It was made clear to me during my May 2005 visit to Nissan that any additional problems would be at my expense. Due to my treatment and experiences at the dealership, I made the decision to visit another repair shop when the problems occurred again in 2006. I did visit the dealership prior to doing so, and requested that I get a printout of service and repair orders on my vehicle, to include recalls. I told them that I was still having the same problems, and they

dismissed me, and looked over me as if I didn't exist. They offered no relief or assistance with the problem that had continued since my initial visit. The problems were multiplying, and they couldn't have cared less. They gave me the printout, and sent me on my way.

In 2006, my car was consuming more and more oil. The power continued to weaken even more, just when I thought it couldn't possibly be any weaker. The car began burning oil at an alarming rate, and the rattle that it made upon start was a nightmare to hear. I felt that I no longer had something that was safe to operate, and couldn't trust it not to stall out, and with serious consequences quite possible. I traveled daily, continued oil changes at 3,000 mile intervals, and continued to add oil in-between the oil changes.

The final straw, which gave me no choice but to visit the most reputable repair shop in Huntsville, which specialized in Nissans, occurred in mid-2006. I got my oil changed in Huntsville a week day evening upon my return from my day's work out of town. The car was really stuttering, feeling as if it would die at any moment. At cruise control, it would just decelerate for no apparent reason, on flat roads at speeds that were set at 45 miles/hour. It would turn off completely. My car couldn't reach 45 miles/hour. Again, I didn't know if it would make it home. I hoped the oil change would improve the situation, but I knew that if it did, the relief would only be short-lived. The following morning, I drove from Huntsville to Boaz. This is approximately 63 miles. My car was emitting thick black smoke from the exhaust. It stopped and started while in operation numerous times. I pulled into the nearest oil change facility, which was Express Oil Change. They said my car had burned all of the oil from the night before, in a distance of 63 miles – a full tank of oil. They added oil to the car as a courtesy, and advised me not to drive it, and to take it to the dealership or a repair shop immediately. The gentleman at Express Oil Change noticed a car seat in my back seat. He said that if I were his daughter, he wouldn't let me drive that car a moment more, not his daughter, and certainly not his daughter with his grandchild in the back seat. He said that it wasn't safe. Even after they added oil, the car still made that terrible rattling sound at start. Before I got out of their parking lot, the car stalled again. Please be reminded that this was over the course of a 63-mile drive, with a fresh oil change purchased only the evening before. Now I'd say that was \$40 not very well spent. I was alarmed, disgusted, devastated, and didn't know what to do. The problems wouldn't go away. They kept on, and kept on, and kept on.

I went to the local Nissan repair shop as mentioned above in June of 2006. One of the owners was given a history of my issues, and he said he was amazed that my car had made it there, as it sounded horrible. He cringed when he started it up. There was virtually no oil, and he added some for me. He advised me not to drive it. We agreed that I'd finish my appointments for the day, and bring it back for repair and diagnostics. I was told that I'd need a costly amount of work to get my car back to "normal" working condition. They pulled the motor out, and the oil rings were stuck on the pistons. This was a result of the car's having to work so hard to get the oil out through the exhaust system, and had caused substantial damage to my car. They replaced the rings, pistons, etc. This cost me over \$2,000, not to mention a week without a car. This also happened to occur just when I was starting a new job. The owner said that they'd had four of five Altimas just like mine (same engine, same year) that had to have this done just within the past two months of the time I had the work done. I was angered that I was still having problems, and that the dealership wasn't owning up to its

responsibilities. Even after the work was done at this repair shop and cost me thousands of dollars, the service engine light remained on. The owner of the repair shop stated that the diagnostic was still reading 420 code – pre-catalytic converter and multi-cylinder misfire. They turned the light off, but it came on the next day. Since they worked with Nissans regularly, they too knew that this was a recall issue. Given my past experiences with the dealership, the repair shop called the dealership on my behalf. The dealership lied to the owner of the repair shop by stating that my car wasn't part of that recall. Little did they know I had the printout from Regal Nissan showing that indeed, my car had been in there multiple times for the problem, and it still hadn't been corrected fully, as yet again the engine diagnostic code was reading the same problem.

Only a month after the repair work was performed as mentioned above, my car was still burning oil, but not nearly to the extent that it was previously. Even so, they suggested it would take about two oil changes for everything to be adjusted to full performance levels. A month transpired, and I took the vehicle back to the repair shop, as I was still experiencing weak power, poor acceleration, and the same rattling that had been occurring for years now. After two oil changes, my car was still burning oil, and at one point, it was almost a quart low. The car again died while going up a mountain. The car was towed to the repair shop that had performed the work. This time, I had to pay more money out of pocket (\$153.55 to be exact). Again, I had to pay for something that was part of a recall, namely a crank sensor, parts and labor. This was to have been remedied at the dealership August 23, 2004. Evidently, it wasn't. My frustration grew, as I was being cheated again and again, and Regal wasn't taking responsibility for their countless oversights and omissions.

All the while, even to this day, my oil has been changed by professionals every 3,000 miles. As noted above, even this proved inadequate to keep my car full of oil, and operating properly, as would be expected on a car I purchased practically brand-new.

I took the car into the repair shop yet again a couple of weeks ago, as the service engine light had never gone out. They did a check, and it was no surprise that it was still reading code 420 – Pre-catalytic converter, multi-cylinder misfire. The car was rattling terribly still upon start, and they noticed the noise immediately. Now, they say there is an issue with the timing chain sensor as well. The owner told me in confidence to "get rid of this piece of &*@# immediately", as I had unfortunately purchased a *lemon*. He said that it had always given me headaches, and would continue to give me headaches, until I got rid of it, and that I should trade it in "yesterday". The man said that they had been hearing rumors of a recall on the engines, but that the rumors had been floating around for months. He said that would be a major and costly ordeal, and one that Nissan likely would try to avoid at any expense. That's all he knew about that. He said some problems they see are so common and prevalent that not even the Nissan parts manufacturer has certain parts in stock. This has to point to major problems, and I know that Nissan is trying to sweep this under the rug, hoping a major recall doesn't ensue.

I would NEVER sell this vehicle to an innocent third-party, and pass this nightmare along to another family, maybe a family just like mine, trying to get by day-to-day, and pinching pennies to make ends meet. I told him how much faith I HAD had in Nissan, but that now I wouldn't buy one to save my life. He said that the good ones are good, but that the bad ones were bad, and that it's luck of the draw. We both concurred that I'd definitely purchased a bad one. He said if I had a V6 model, these problems wouldn't have happened to me. If only I could've been so lucky, but again hindsight is 20/20, and

I never would have imagined I'd have such an ordeal upon purchasing a car practically brand new, from the only Nissan dealership in Huntsville, and one that had been around a long time. The owner of said repair shop said that aside from trading it in, I should call Nissan North America, and tell them that I'd been sold a lemon, and ask them what they were going to do about it. He said to tell Nissan North America my entire story, from start to finish, and hope and pray that something would be done to right this terrible situation. He said that there was hope, and that he'd known persons who had been assisted by going to the higher-ups, namely Nissan North America. He was unsurprised that the local dealership had dismissed me in the manner that they had.

Another interesting tidbit of information is as follows. There was a local summer auto sale at Joe Davis Stadium this summer. I took my car by the Regal Nissan tent set-up, and spoke to a very friendly salesman. Before I could even get out the full story, the salesman said, "Let me guess, the car started losing power, burning oil, etc. They replaced your motor, right?". I said nothing, and let him continue to talk, knowing I may learn something. He proceeded to tell me that his girlfriend had owned 3, **yes 3**, of these 2002 Nissan Altimas, and that the motor had been replaced on EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM. Obviously, this gentleman, an employee of Regal Nissan, knew of this problem I'd been experiencing firsthand. He was somewhat taken aback when I told him that no, they didn't replace my engine, and in fact, I'd just put over \$2,000 into the vehicle due to Regal not taking care of the problem when it began some years ago. He apologized profusely, and tried to get me to trade the car in on a new Pathfinder, or something of the sort. I thanked him for his time and information, and left the stadium with a greater knowledge of just how much Nissan is trying to get away with this and not do the right thing to save money, albeit likely large sums of money. The worst part of it, at least for that unknowing kind salesman, is that had I not had this ongoing, horrendous experience, I probably would have taken him up on that, because **NISSANS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE DEPENDABLE, RELIABLE, GOOD CARS!** Mine has been anything but that, to say the least.

I have since found out that the vehicle I was driving had been part of a recall with only 457 miles under its belt, with that recall being an air bag sensor. I was not notified of this when I purchased the vehicle, and in fact, inquired as to the vehicle's accident and service history. I was told the history was perfect.

I've encountered local newspaper articles about the automaker Nissan "investigating the cause of excessive oil consumption in the cars' engines". I read articles stating that "If the cam drive belt breaks, the engine could be severely damaged when the pistons hit the opened valves". I've read the risks associated with the faulty design of these four-cylinder engines, but year-after-year, Nissan keeps cranking them out, putting innocent and unaware consumers at a very unfair disadvantage.

It seems my car has been a part of practically every recall pertaining to the 2002 Nissan Altima, and it seems that it's a part of a recall that perhaps has yet to be named or announced. After much research, I have discovered many consumers just like myself that have experienced the same exact problems. Many were done wrong, as I have been, and some were treated with fairness and justice. I suppose that in the end, a lot has to do with the dealership one visits. It seems that all are not treated equally, even those with identical problems and issues.

I have incurred substantial costs as a result of these problems, and should never have had to invest such time, money, and effort into a 2002 Nissan Altima, or any car for that matter. My expenditures as a result of these issues have gone far above and beyond routine care and maintenance, as I have done these things all the while. One would expect more from any new car, and most would expect even more from the Nissan brand. This car is a lemon, and I expect remedies to be offered as a result of all that has transpired. This is what is right. I still have 1 ½ years to pay on this car, and the gentleman at the repair shop let me know in no uncertain terms that my car will not make it that long.

I should be compensated for all of the expenses, all of the losses, and all of the time I've spent needlessly because someone, or some entity, namely Regal Nissan, didn't care about its customer, a customer whose father had purchased a vehicle from them before. Regal Nissan knows nothing of loyalty. I hope that Nissan North America chooses to practice better values than its dealer affiliates, or at least its dealer affiliate in Huntsville, Alabama. Most importantly, I want to be rid of this car, once and for all, and I want a vehicle that is dependable, and that I feel confident is safe to drive and confident that my passengers and children are safe while riding in it.

It is my sincere hope that by writing this letter, I will open the eyes of those who have the power to make the decisions that matter to Nissan's customers. I hope that this letter will reach someone's hand that truly does care about the consumer and customer, not just about the impact on profit margins and the bottom line. I hope that this letter reaches one's hand that has a strong moral sense, integrity, and a desire to do right upon others. I hope. I pray. I hope.

There have been countless times when I have had near-miss accidents as a result of the problems aforementioned. Both I and my children were in danger as a result of these instances. While someone was watching over us during these occasions, there is certainly no guarantee that someone will be watching over us the next time these nightmares occur. I look forward to a response in the very near future.

Regards,

/s/

[REDACTED]

CC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Consumer Reports
The Center for Auto Safety