

June 29, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

As a diverse coalition of groups representing vehicle safety, consumers, public health, bicyclists, pedestrians, mobility, cities, first responders, child safety, and families of crash victims, we write to express our strong support for the Motor Vehicle Safety Title and other pro-safety provisions in the infrastructure and surface transportation reauthorization legislation, the Moving Forward Act (H.R. 2). This legislation would be an essential step forward for vehicle safety, and we urge you to enact it with urgency.

An early estimate from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows that 36,120 people were killed on our Nation's roads last year. Alarming, despite a slight decrease in fatalities overall in 2019, deaths in crashes involving large trucks rose for the fifth consecutive year in a row. Additionally, in 2018, both the number of pedestrians and bicyclists killed in crashes reached their highest levels since 1990. Moreover, the annual cost of crashes is \$836 billion in direct and indirect expenses, according to NHTSA. The Moving Forward Act directly targets this toll with countermeasures that would improve the safety of new vehicles, resulting in crashes prevented, lives saved, injuries reduced and costs contained.

Advanced driver assistance systems would prevent and mitigate crashes. Effective and available technologies such as automatic emergency braking (AEB), lane departure warning and blind spot warning have been demonstrated to significantly reduce crashes by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and recommended by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to avoid collisions. Despite clear and compelling evidence of safety benefits, this technology is not standard equipment on all vehicles and instead can be [sold at a high premium as part of luxury packages or on expensive trim models](#). This bill would require AEB to be on all new passenger cars, large trucks and school buses, subject to a minimum performance standard, to ensure it is widely available and assured to perform safely and reliably. It would also require a suite of other technologies on new cars. This represents a game-changing improvement in traffic safety for everyone using the roads.

Overdue upgrades to the U.S. New Car Assessment Program -- known for its five-star safety ratings -- would improve trusted, lifesaving consumer information. Over four decades ago, the U.S. was the first nation to establish an auto safety consumer information program, the New Car Assessment Program (NCAP). While this model now has been emulated across the globe, U.S. NCAP unfortunately has not kept pace and has fallen behind our international counterparts. Augmenting NCAP by including crash tests and ratings in line with current technology and vehicle performance is long overdue. The Moving Forward Act spurs

this much-needed action by directing NHTSA to incorporate crash avoidance technologies, crashworthiness features and vulnerable road user safety, among other issues. The bill also requires NHTSA to continuously update NCAP, with the goal of ensuring that it does not again fall behind like it has in recent years. These changes would ensure U.S. NCAP is restored to its original significance, influencing automakers and helping consumers as they make a decision when buying a car.

Technology would be a catalyst for potentially eliminating drunk driving crashes.

Alcohol-impaired driving remains a leading killer on America's roads, with nearly one-third of all crash fatalities attributed to drunk driving. Equipping vehicles with technology that can identify impairment may be the long-awaited key to preventing this scourge. Through monitoring of operational cues or advanced sensors that can detect the presence of alcohol, vehicles could soon be able to provide alerts or even prevent or shut down driving if necessary. This revolutionary development could save thousands of lives each year.

Detection and alert systems would be an important safeguard to protect children from preventable "hot car" deaths. In 2019, at least 53 children tragically died in vehicular heatstroke incidents after being unknowingly left in a car or entering one on their own. This devastating toll could be prevented by the installation of technology that is available and affordable to detect the presence of an occupant and issue a warning that attracts attention. Despite years of public education efforts aimed at stopping heatstroke deaths, the number of children dying in hot cars has reached all-time highs in recent years. This bill would take the vital step of directing automakers to equip all new cars with lifesaving technology to save precious lives.

Unique risks of cars with keyless ignition systems would be addressed. Keyless ignition systems, or push-button starts, have become a much more common feature in new vehicles. In fact, according to Edmunds, nearly two-thirds of vehicles sold in 2018 had a keyless ignition as standard equipment. While these systems offer a level of convenience, they also come with risks of carbon monoxide poisoning and vehicle rollaway. The Moving Forward Act would address these hazards by requiring the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to issue a safety standard for keyless ignition systems.

Loopholes in limousine safety that can lead to catastrophic crashes would be closed.

While rides in limousines are commonly associated with some of the most wonderful, memorable events in one's life, due to inadequate safety standards and rules, a crash involving a limo can turn somebody's happiest day into their worst nightmare. By directing the U.S. DOT to take action upgrading the safety of limousine design and operations, the Moving Forward Act would give limo occupants an enhanced level of safety and help prevent unthinkable tragedies.

Equipping school buses with seat belts and other essential systems would make kids safer as they travel to and from school. The NTSB has made a number of recommendations for school bus safety following investigations of horrific school bus crashes. The Moving

Forward Act turns these findings into policy on school bus upgrades including seat belts, automatic emergency braking, electronic stability control, and fire prevention and mitigation.

Violent crashes involving truck underride would be prevented with adequate guards. The Moving Forward Act spurs progress on a long-overdue update to the standard for rear underride guards on trucks and initiates research to study the addition of side guards. This considerable advance would help stop cars from traveling under the rear or side of a truck's trailer and allow safety systems on passenger vehicles, including air bags and seat belts, to work as intended to properly protect the car's occupants – saving lives and preventing injuries.

Deficient legislation on autonomous vehicles (AVs) should not be tacked onto the Moving Forward Act. Driverless cars, or AVs, hold tremendous potential for reducing traffic crashes, fatalities and injuries, and increasing mobility if they are developed and deployed in a way that prioritizes safety, equity, access and sustainability. AV legislation, which will likely set policy on this issue for decades to come, must incorporate recommendations from the NTSB based on its crash investigations of vehicles with autonomous capabilities as well as include commonsense safeguards and minimum performance standards. We commend the sponsors of the bill for rejecting attempts to include AV legislation failing to address those policy challenges to our Nation's transportation system in the Moving Forward Act. We look forward to continuing to work with Congress on AV legislation that promotes innovation and mitigates known and foreseeable negative impacts.

The Moving Forward Act adds to a long and successful history of surface transportation reauthorization bills with a strong safety title. The advancements outlined above -- as well as a number of others including measures to prevent tired truckers, keep unsafe motor carriers off the road, and better protect pedestrians, bicyclists and other vulnerable road users -- would substantially move the needle in the right direction on safety. We urge you to support these provisions, and to reject any amendments that would strike them or otherwise weaken the safety upgrades in the bill or existing safety laws.

By passing this legislation, the U.S. House of Representatives would be demonstrating remarkable leadership in bringing about meaningful reductions in crash deaths and injuries. We are very grateful for the work of Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) and Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee Chair Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), as well as Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Highways and Transit Subcommittee Chair Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), along with the sponsors of the many standalone bills that inspired the provisions contained in the Moving Forward Act. We urge you to support the bill's passage and enact it swiftly.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety
American Public Health Association
AnnaLeah & Mary for Truck Safety

California Coalition for Children's Safety & Health
Care for Crash Victims
Center for Auto Safety
Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways
Consumer Action
Consumer Federation of America
Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety
Consumer Reports
Emergency Nurses Association
Families for Safe Streets
Joan Claybrook, Former Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy
KidsAndCars.org
League of American Bicyclists
National Association of City Transportation Officials
National Consumers League
National Safety Council
New Urban Mobility Alliance
Parents Against Tired Truckers
Public Citizen
Safety Research & Strategies
Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research
Stop Underrides – In Loving Memory of Roya
Transportation Alternatives
Trauma Foundation
Truck Safety Coalition

cc: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives