

May 22, 2019

The Honorable David E. Price, Chairman
The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

As you prepare for tomorrow's mark-up of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Appropriations bill for Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD), we respectfully request consideration of our position on some of the proposals in the bill. As leaders of organizations committed to preventing motor vehicle crashes, saving lives, reducing injuries and containing costs, we support robust funding for the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and its agencies. We commend you for your commitment to improving safety on our Nation's roads. The provisions in this bill will help achieve that goal with specific initiatives such as combating impaired driving, enhancing the safety of child passengers and strengthening U.S. DOT's ability to address the issues presented by the development of autonomous technology. Safety advances are especially crucial as traffic crashes, deaths and injuries remain unacceptably high. Moreover, the U.S. DOT is facing increasing challenges as safety recalls continue to proliferate and vehicles with unproven autonomous systems are put onto America's streets.

Each day on average over 100 people are killed and nearly 7,500 more are injured in motor vehicle crashes. Further, these crashes impose a tremendous cost on society. Direct economic costs such as lost productivity, medical expenses and property damage amount to \$242 billion annually – resulting in a “crash tax” on every American of \$784. Moreover, when considering costs such as lost quality of life, the overall cost to society is a staggering \$836 billion. Clearly, we can and must be doing more to mitigate this needless carnage on our roads.

As the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) plays a key role in advancing highway and auto safety, it is critical that they have the necessary resources to carry out their lifesaving mission. However, the agency is chronically underfunded. Currently, 95 percent of transportation-related fatalities and 99 percent of transportation injuries, involve motor vehicles. Yet, NHTSA receives only one percent of the overall DOT budget. NHTSA is responsible for the safety of over 323 million Americans who drive or ride in more than 288 million registered motor vehicles. We are pleased that the FY20 THUD bill includes an increase to NHTSA funding for operations and research, specifically its vehicle safety programs. In addition, NHTSA must be given adequate resources and funding to effectively oversee the development and deployment of driverless cars. We support ensuring that NHTSA has the ability to retain sufficient expertise and personnel to carry out this crucial task.

Truck crashes also are a major public health epidemic. In 2017, 4,761 people were killed in large truck crashes. This represents a nine percent increase from the previous year and a staggering 41 percent increase since 2009. We are very glad that the FY20 THUD bill does not

include any riders that would increase truck size and weight limits. Further, we support the restoration to public view all data generated by the Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) program. However, we are strongly opposed to a provision that would extend an exemption for livestock and insect haulers from having to comply with the electronic logging device (ELD) rule. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has repeatedly cited fatigue as a major contributor to truck crashes and included reducing fatigue related crashes on its 2019-20 Most Wanted List of Safety Changes. In December 2017, a rule took effect that mandated the use of ELDs to record truck driver hours of service (HOS). ELDs offer an objective record of a driver's hours to promote compliance. Special interest exemptions to the ELD rule allow certain segments to evade HOS limits and should be resoundingly rejected. Further, states should retain their authority to enact enhanced safety and working conditions for truck drivers. Unfortunately over the past several years, there has been a relentless assault on truck driver rules and regulations. Efforts to weaken, rollback and repeal existing protections should be stopped.

Our organizations are grateful for your attention to our position and your work on behalf of the motoring public. As the FY20 THUD Appropriations bill moves forward through consideration, we strongly urge you to reject any "riders" that would further degrade safety and ensure sufficient funding for DOT. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Harry Adler, Executive Director
Truck Safety Coalition

Jack Gillis, Executive Director
Consumer Federation of America

Janette Fennell, Founder and President
KidsAndCars.org

Jennifer Tierney, Board Member
CRASH Foundation

Daphne Izer, Co-Founder and Chair
Parents Against Tired Truckers

cc: Members of the Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies