ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

March 1, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical, public health and law enforcement groups and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent crashes, save lives, reduce injuries, and contain costs, thanks you for including *Sammy's Law* as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 state budget in Senate Bill (SB) 8308/Assembly Bill (AB) 8808. This measure will improve safety by permitting cities with a population over one million people to decrease speed limits from 25 to 20 miles per hour (mph) on residential streets. This safety upgrade is critical and timely.

Speeding is a major contributor to crashes in New York and disproportionately affects the Empire State. While speeding is a factor in 29[i] percent of crashes nationally, 36 percent of crashes in the state note speeding as a factor. New York ranks in the top dozen states for its high percentage of speed-related crash fatalities.[ii] In 2021, of the 1,157 traffic fatalities in the state, 418 were speeding related.[iii] Moreover, urban areas are particularly at risk as 78 percent of the state's traffic fatalities occurred in urban areas.[iv] In addition to being tragic, the preventable deaths resulting from speeding are costly. New York incurred nearly $24 billion in economic harm, which is equivalent to a $1,214 per resident "crash tax" according to a 2019 analysis.[v]

Excess speed contributes to both the frequency and severity of motor vehicle crashes and proves especially dangerous for vulnerable road users (VRU) such as pedestrians, bicyclists and roadside first responders who lack the protective structure of a vehicle. Small increases in speed cause serious declines in safety. The average risk of death for a pedestrian is 10 percent at an impact speed of 23 mph, 25 percent at 32 mph, and 50 percent at 42 mph.[vi] Lowering speed limits is a proven strategy. A 2022 study of speed limit reductions in Seattle, WA, found a five-mph decrease in the speed limit was associated with a 17 percent reduction in downtown crashes involving a police-reported injury.[vii] Similarly, on high-capacity urban roads which are not expressways, Seattle experienced a 20 percent decline in crashes resulting in a police-reported injury.[viii]

The efficacy of lower speeds also is demonstrated by outcomes of converse scenarios when speed limits are increased. A study found that from 1993-2017, a five-mph increase in state speed limits led to 37,000 more traffic deaths.[ix]

Sammy's Law will increase safety and decrease crash risk while curbing related costs. We urge you to work with the legislature to retain and enact this language in SB 8308/AB 8808 in the FY 2024-2025 budget.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

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i NHTSA. (2023). Overview of Motor Vehicle Crashes in 2021. U.S. Department of Transportation, available at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813435.

ii Traffic Safety Facts: 2021 Data, Speeding, NHTSA, July 2023, DOT HS 813 473,

available at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813473.

[iii] State Traffic Safety Information for New York (2021), NHTSA, available at https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm.

[iv] *Ibid*.

[v] The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Feb. 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403.

[vi] Impact Speed and a Pedestrian's Risk of Severe Injury or Death, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Sep. 2011., available at https://aaafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2011PedestrianRiskVsSpeedReport.pdf.

[vii] Effects of Lowering Speed Limits On Crash Severity in Seattle, Mar. 2023, IIHS, available at https://www.iihs.org/api/datastoredocument/bibliography/2279.

[viii] *Ibid*.

[ix] Farmer, Charles M., The effects of higher speed limits on traffic fatalities in the United States, 1993–2017, IIHS, April 2019; available at https://www.iihs.org/api/datastoredocument/bibliography/2188.