ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Ted Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Cruz and Ranking Member Cantwell:

Thank you for convening tomorrow's hearing, "Hit the Road, Mac: The Future of Self-Driving Cars." Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) urges this Committee to advance proven solutions to improve safety on our Nation's roads and establish sensible safeguards to ensure self-driving cars are developed and deployed safely. Advocates respectfully requests this letter be included in the hearing record.

Motor Vehicle Deaths Remain Historically High

America's roads are moving an ever-increasing number of people and goods.[1] This activity comes with a significant yet preventable human toll as well as infrastructure challenges and a robust price tag. On average, 112 people were killed every day on roads in the U.S., totaling nearly 41,000 fatalities in 2023.[2] This is a 24 percent increase in deaths in just a decade.[3] An additional 2.44 million people were injured.[4] Early projections for 2024 traffic fatalities remain at a similar historic high level; over 39,000 people are estimated to have been killed that year.[5]

In addition to the physical and emotional repercussions and infrastructure damage due to motor vehicle crashes, the annual economic cost is approximately $340 billion (2019 dollars).[6] This figure equates to every person living in the U.S. essentially paying an annual "crash tax" of over $1,000. Moreover, the total value of societal harm from motor vehicle crashes in 2019, which includes loss of life, pain and decreased quality of life, was nearly $1.4 trillion.[7] When adjusted solely for inflation, this figure amounts to over $1.79 trillion.[8] Research from the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) finds motor vehicle crashes cost employers $72.2 billion in direct crash-related expenses in 2019.[9]

These devastating crashes impact millions of Americans each year including the families of U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) Secretary Duffy and Members of Congress. These tragedies result in long-lasting effects which often are not accounted for in statistics alone. For every single death and serious injury, there is a horrific ripple effect forever changing the lives of children, parents, friends and communities. However, the solutions to meaningfully reduce its impact are known, including vehicle safety improvements.

Federal Safety Standards Prevent Motor Vehicle Crashes, Save Lives, Avert Injuries and Reduce Associated Costs

Advocates always has enthusiastically championed proven vehicle safety technology and for good reason -- it is one of the most effective strategies for preventing deaths and injuries. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), "[t]he FMVSS [Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards] remain NHTSA's core way of ensuring that all motor vehicles provide the requisite level of safety performance and provide it within a technical timeframe."[10] In fact, the agency has estimated that from 1968 through 2019, NHTSA's safety standards have prevented more than 865,000 deaths, 49 million nonfatal injuries and damage to 65 million vehicles.[11] In addition, during that time frame the comprehensive societal benefits amounted to $17.3 trillion, using 2019 dollars.[12]

In 1991, Advocates led the coalition that supported enactment of the bipartisan Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991[13] which included a mandate for front seat airbags as standard equipment. As a result, by 1997, every new car sold in the United States was equipped with this technology and the lives saved have been significant. Frontal airbags have saved an estimated 70,059 lives from 1968 to 2019, according to NHTSA.[14]

Advocates built on this success by supporting additional proven lifesaving technologies as standard equipment in all vehicles in other federal legislation and regulatory proposals. These efforts include: tire pressure monitoring systems;[15] rear outboard 3-point safety belts;[16] electronic stability control;[17] rear safety belt reminder systems;[18] brake transmission interlocks;[19] safety belts on motorcoaches;[20] rear-view cameras;[21] safer power window switches;[22] advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS);[23] advanced impaired driving prevention technology;[24] rear designated seating position alert (hot cars);[25] enhanced vehicle hood and bumpers to better protect vulnerable road users;[26] and, advanced head lamps.[27]

The recent regulatory action undertaken by NHTSA to require pedestrian automatic emergency braking (PAEB) on light passenger vehicles is an excellent example of the benefits of requiring effective safety systems as standard equipment. The agency predicts that PAEB will save 362 lives, mitigate over 24,000 injuries annually and result in a yearly cost benefit of between $5.8-$7.2 billion. The Final Rule for PAEB issued in 2024 also noted that the end user price for the safety technology for a popular make and model vehicle, a Toyota Camry, is $240.24.[28] This cost is modest, particularly given the returns on the investment. Moreover, research performed by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) has found that AEB can reduce front-to-rear crashes with injuries by 56 percent. Any delay in implementing the Final Rule is an unnecessary safety setback.

Research also demonstrates that lifesaving vehicle safety technologies are not the chief contributor to increased prices for new cars. IIHS /Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI) President David Harkey recently wrote in an article, "Sacrificing safety is not the way to make cars affordable," "…safety features aren't the main thing pushing up prices.[29] Buyers

are paying more for convenience features such as hands-free power liftgates, puddle lights and automatically retracting mirrors. Size is also a major factor: Americans continue to gravitate toward larger vehicles."[30] Additionally, a 2023 study by Consumer Reports (CR) found that "[c]ommonly reported changes in average transaction prices appear to be primarily driven by shifts toward larger, more expensive SUVs and away from smaller and cheaper cars, rather than from the cost of technology improvements in individual models."[31] As a result, CR concluded that "[t]hese findings prove that regulators can and should be aggressive in ensuring that automakers continue to deliver cost-effective technology improvements that save dollars and lives."[32]

Experimental Autonomous Driving Technology Remains Unproven

In stark contrast to the effectiveness of federal standards and proven safety technology, cars equipped with various levels of automated driving systems (ADS), for which there are no FMVSS, already have been involved in numerous serious and deadly crashes, many of which have been subject to investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and NHTSA.[33] As NHTSA noted in the 2025 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on the ADS-Equipped Vehicle Safety, Transparency, and Evaluation Program (AV STEP), vehicles equipped with automated driving systems (ADS) "…often struggle with driving tasks that humans consider relatively simple."[34] Furthermore, according to data collected by NHTSA's Standing General Order (SGO) 2021-1 requiring manufacturers to report certain crashes involving vehicles equipped with ADS or SAE Level 2 ADAS, there have been approximately 1,874 crashes involving ADS and 3,003 with ADAS. These include 51 crashes resulting in a fatality.[35]

In addition, several San Francisco transportation agencies submitted comments to the California Public Utilities Commission in 2023 detailing numerous dangerous incidents involving AVs operating in the city.[36] These events include:

- Interfering with emergency response operations including 18 incidents documented by the San Francisco Fire Department in which AVs put firefighters and the public at risk.
- Making planned and unplanned stops in travel lanes that have interfered with transit service and blocked traffic.
- Intrusions into construction zones where City employees were working.
- Obstructions caused by AVs having to interpret and respond to human traffic control officers.
- Erratic driving.[37]

According to recent media reports, similar issues continue to occur including failing to stop for school buses,[38] ceasing operating in the middle of city streets during a power outage[39] and traveling on light rail tracks causing the robotaxi's passenger to flee.[40] The NHTSA and the NTSB have opened investigations into the incidents involving school buses.

Just last week, a child was reportedly hit by an autonomous vehicle during school drop off.[41]

Many promises have been touted about AVs bringing reductions in motor vehicle crashes and resultant deaths and injuries, lowering traffic congestion and vehicle emissions, expanding mobility and accessibility, improving efficiency, and creating more equitable transportation options and opportunities.[42] However, as auto industry leaders have acknowledged, these outcomes are far from certain.[43]

Additionally, supporters of AVs often assert that these vehicles will improve roadway safety by inaccurately stating that 94 percent of crashes are due to human error pointing to a report from NHTSA as support for this misleading claim. However, the agency stated in the same document with this statistic that "[a]lthough the critical reason is an important part of the description of events leading up to the crash, **it is not intended to be interpreted as the cause of the crash nor as the assignment of the fault to the driver, vehicle, or environment."**[44] [*Emphasis added*.] In addition, NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy has declared that using the statistic in such a manner is "dangerous" and "[a]t the same time it relieves everybody else of responsibility they have for improving safety, including DOT."[45] Proponents of AVs also have made the claim that these vehicles will prevent 90 percent of crash fatalities.[46] Yet, as NHTSA states in the AV STEP NPRM, "[t]his proposal recognizes that the potential of ADS is still largely unproven."[47]

AV manufacturers and proponents of the technology often claim that AVs are safer because they don't get tired, distracted or drive impaired. While some AVs may be readily able to avoid crashes caused by those human drivers who operate impaired, fatigued or distracted, they also may cause crashes that sober, alert and engaged drivers would routinely avoid. AVs, which are essentially billion-dollar pieces of equipment with years of research, should not drive better than only the worst drivers on the road.

Often, claims made about the safety of their operations do not provide a complete picture. For example, as of September 2025, "Waymo has driven 127 million rider-only miles without a human driver."[48] Human beings drove 3.2 trillion miles on U.S. roads in 2023 alone. Thus, in its entire history from approximately 2019 to September 2025, Waymo vehicles have operated without a human driver for less than 0.004% of the mileage driven on U.S. roads by human drivers in a single year.[49]

Waymo claims reductions in "serious injury or worse crashes," "airbag deployment in any vehicle crashes," and "injury-causing crashes."[50] However, over 40 percent of the crashes reported by Waymo pursuant to the SGO had no human occupants in the vehicle. The absence of passengers in a Waymo vehicle in a crash by default lowers the injury rate and could be unrelated to the safety performance of the vehicle given that there was no occupant available to be injured. Moreover, if the goal of AV operations is to transport people, claiming a safety benefit from crashes where no occupant is present is incongruous. Additionally, the majority of the incidents reported by Waymo pursuant to the

SGO involved the Waymo vehicle being struck in the rear on roads with speed limits of 25 mph or less, conditions not generally associated with airbag deployments. In sum, Waymo vehicles are operating on roads with lower speed limits, and are over involved in rear end crashes, with a large number of incidents not involving passengers in the vehicle.

Lastly, the SGO does not provide the data needed to fully analyze the operational difficulties and incidents that are occurring with Waymo vehicles. To properly assess the safety of these operations, additional performance data beyond crashes is needed considering recent events such as Waymo vehicles traveling on light rail tracks and passing school buses.[51]

The U.S. is Not Lagging Behind Other Countries in Deployment

In sharp contrast to what is happening in the U.S., other countries are taking a more calculated, careful and cautious approach to the development of AVs.[52] Often-repeated claims about the U.S. "falling behind" other countries in the "race" for AVs are simply not true nor supported by research. For example:

- China continues to require permits or restricts operations of AVs on its roads to only those areas approved by the authorities.[53] In fact, the nation recently delayed plans for production of AVs after a deadly crash.[54]
- Germany continues to require permits, approvals, and limits areas of operation for AVs.[55]
- In Japan, the introduction of Level 4 vehicles will be controlled and limited to specific, lightly populated areas.[56]
- The latest United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) regulations will limit operations to restrict risks and oversee approval through testing and other requirements.[57]

In sum, no country is selling fully automated vehicles for unfettered use to the public and by many accounts, none will be for a significant amount of time.[58] According to the most recent KPMG analysis, the U.S. ranks fourth in the world for AV readiness, while China stands at number twenty.[59] The U.S. is not lagging behind other countries in allowing AVs to go to market, but we are behind in establishing comprehensive regulations to ensure public safety will not be jeopardized or diminished.

The AV Tenets Offer a Sound and Sensible People-and-Safety-First Approach to AV Deployment

To identify a people-and-safety-first path forward on AVs, Advocates and numerous stakeholders developed the "AV Tenets."[60] These sound and sensible policy positions should be a foundational part of any national AV policy. The AV Tenets are based on expert analysis, real-world experience, and public opinion. They have four main categories including: 1) prioritizing safety of all road users; 2) guaranteeing accessibility and equity; 3) preserving consumer and worker rights; and, 4) ensuring local control and sustainable

transportation. They are supported by a coalition of more than 65 organizations representing consumers, public health and safety experts, pedestrians, bicyclists, disability rights activists, emergency responders, law enforcement, labor and others.

Requiring that AVs meet minimum performance standards, including for cyber security and a "vision test" to ensure the vehicle can respond to all people, vehicles and objects in the roadway environment, is essential. In addition, AV operations must be subject to adequate oversight, including a comprehensive database accessible by vehicle identification number (VIN) with basic safety information. These are fundamental prerequisites to prevent crashes caused by AVs and boost consumer confidence in this burgeoning technology. While the AV Tenets were first established in 2020, the approach remains relevant today as progress in advancing key safeguards to ensure safety and the purported societal benefits of AVs has not been met.

Legislation to Improve Safety for Vehicles Equipped with an ADS Must be Advanced; Anti-Safety Measures Should be Opposed

Advocates supports: the AV Safety Data Act, S. 3742/ H.R. 4376, which will help to ensure U.S DOT is getting important data on the operations of AVs; the Stay in Your Lane Act, S. 3536**,** to compel manufacturers of vehicles equipped with an ADS to identify the operation design domain (ODD) for which the systems can safely operate and restrict operations to such; and, the Know Before You Drive Act, Discussion Draft, which will ensure consumers have accurate information on the capabilities of partially automated driving systems and AVs.

Advocates opposes discussion draft versions of the Motor Vehicle Modernization Act (Discussion Draft), which fails to ensure that the U.S. New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) is upgraded to meet its international counterparts and provides a pathway for mass exemptions from safety standards for vehicles equipped with an ADS, and the Safely Ensuring Lives Future Deployment and Research In Vehicle Evolution (SELF DRIVE) Act of 2026 (Discussion Draft), which perpetuates anti-safety measures proposed in past AV legislation including: a lack of new safety standards to ensure the self-driving systems perform to a minimum level of safety; preemption of states' ability to protect users on their roadways prior to federal AV regulation; weakening of current safety data reporting requirements; and, a lack of regulation of remote AV operators, among other issues. Advocates also opposes the Autonomous Mobility Ensuring Regulation, Innovation, Commerce, and Advancement Driving Reliability in Vehicle Efficiency and Safety Act (AMERICA DRIVES) Act (H.R. 4661), to preempt state laws requiring a human driver or a remote operator in commercial motor vehicles (CMV) operating with an ADS Level 4 or 5 (ACMVs) and update regulations as well as inform future regulations to make them favorable for ACMV operations including for emergency beacons, and the Autonomous Vehicle Acceleration Act (S. 1798), to modify existing safety standards to support mass deployment of AVs as outlined in a 2016 Volpe Center Report, *Review of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) for Automated Vehicles*.

Major Contributors of Crashes Must be Addressed with Effective Solutions
We urge this Committee to continue to address the leading contributing factors to motor vehicle crashes. In 2023, alcohol impaired driving resulted in 12,429 people killed;[61] speeding resulted in 11,775 people killed;[62] 10,484 vehicle occupants killed in crashes were unrestrained;[63] and, crashes in which at least one driver was distracted resulted in 3,275 fatalities.[64] In 2023, 7,314 pedestrians and 1,166 pedalcyclists were killed in traffic crashes.[65] Motorcycles continue to be the most hazardous form of motor vehicle transportation;[66] 6,335 riders were killed in 2023.[67] From 2013-2023, fatalities involving pedestrian increased 53 percent, pedalcyclists increased 55 percent and motorcycles increased 35 percent.[68] Additionally, in 2021, the most recent year for which data is available according to the Non-Traffic Surveillance (NTS) system, an estimated 3,990 people were killed in non-traffic motor vehicle crashes, an increase of 26 percent from 2020.[69] These issues are persistent, and the solutions are known and available, yet remain underused, underfunded or are not required as standard equipment in vehicles.

Advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) can mitigate the issues of impairment, speeding, distraction and fatigue
Crashes, including those that result from some of the leading contributors to fatalities, can be prevented or mitigated by AEB and other ADAS systems. Research by IIHS has demonstrated significant crash reductions associated with these safety systems.[70]

We urge this Committee to conduct oversight to ensure the U.S. DOT issues the Final Rule for AEB in heavy vehicles and lane departure warning (LDW) and lane keeping assist (LKA) in passenger vehicles, as Congressionally mandated. Additionally, we urge Congress to direct NHTSA to enhance the AEB rule by including bicycle and motorcycle rider detection and response in all lighting conditions. Research conducted by IIHS found that clothing which makes pedestrians stand out to human drivers may make them invisible to automated crash prevention systems, so ensuring AEB operates properly in all lighting conditions is essential.[71] As noted, the Final Rule for AEB in passenger vehicles must be swiftly complied with, absent added delay.

We also urge Congress to direct U.S. DOT to issue standards and requirements for other vehicle safety technologies shown by research to reduce crashes and impacts, including as noted by IIHS research, blind spot detection, rear AEB and rear cross traffic alert.

Impaired Driving
In 2019, the total comprehensive cost of drunk driving over the .08 percent blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit was estimated at nearly $296 billion.[72] Adjusted for inflation only, that amounts to $373 billion in 2025 dollars.[73] The total cost to employers of motor vehicle crashes with an alcohol-impaired employee or dependent driving (both on-the-job and off-the-job) was $8 billion in 2018 (expressed in 2019 dollars).[74] Accounting for inflation only, that amounts to over $10 billion in 2025 dollars.[75]

According to NHTSA, between 2011-2020, an average of almost 10,500 people were killed each year due to alcohol impaired driving crashes.[76] The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) directed NHTSA to issue a FMVSS requiring passenger motor vehicles to be equipped with impaired driving prevention technology by 2024.[77] IIHS research estimates that passive impaired driving prevention technology will save more than 10,000 lives each year, once widely deployed.[78] The agency issued an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) in January 2024 but has taken no further regulatory action.[79] Until NHTSA completes this overdue rulemaking, lives will continue to be needlessly lost, injuries suffered and associated costs expended. As such, we urge this Committee to employ its oversight authority to ensure NHTSA swiftly issues a Final Rule.

Speeding

Speeding-related crashes cause $46.4 billion in economic costs and $225 billion in comprehensive costs (2019).[80] These costs account for 14 percent of all economic costs and 16 percent of all societal harm (measured as comprehensive costs) from motor vehicle crashes.[81] If these costs were updated for inflation alone, in 2025 they would equate to $58.6 billion in economic costs and $284 billion in comprehensive costs.[82] Speeding-related crashes cost employers nearly $10 billion in 2018 (expressed in 2019 dollars); the majority are a result of off-the-job crashes.[83] If this cost were updated for inflation alone, in 2025 it would equate to $12.6 billion.[84]

Excess speed can contribute to both the frequency and severity of motor vehicle crashes. At higher speeds, additional time is required to stop a vehicle, and more distance is traveled before corrective maneuvers can be implemented. Speeding reduces a driver's ability to react to emergencies created by driver inattention, unsafe maneuvers of other vehicles, roadway hazards, vehicle issues (such as tire blowouts) or perilous weather conditions. Increases in speed also can mean life or death for vulnerable road users (VRUs) who lack the protective structure of a vehicle. While many drivers have a proclivity to exceed posted speed limits or may approve of higher speed limits, AAA has found that raising speed limits leads to a very minimal reduction in time on the road noting, "Raising speed limits is often thought of as a way to improve traffic flow and to allow drivers to get to their destinations more quickly. However, AAA research shows that driving at higher speeds increases risk which can outweigh the potential benefits of saving a few minutes of time."[85]

Intelligent speed assistance (ISA) can provide information to drivers about present speed limits, warn drivers when a vehicle speed is above the limit, prevent a vehicle from exceeding the speed limit, or maintain a set speed.[86] The U.S. DOT Volpe Center released research, "New York City Intelligent Speed Assistance Pilot Evaluation," in 2024 which showed "ISA produced a 64 percent reduction in overall speeding and an 82 percent decrease on high-speed roads."[87] The IIHS found that more than "60% of drivers would find it acceptable if their vehicle provided an audible and visual warning when they exceeded the posted speed limit."[88] The NTSB has recommended that NHTSA require ISA in all new vehicles that, at a minimum, warns drivers when they exceed the speed limit. States have

already started acting on this technology; Washington State, Virginia and the District of Columbia have enacted laws for ISA use for repeat and/or extreme speeding offenders. All states should be incentivized to follow suit, and ISA should be required on all new vehicles in the next surface transportation reauthorization bill.

Occupant Protection

Seat belt use is a proven lifesaver. From 1975 to 2019, seat belts prevented over 403,000 fatalities and saved society approximately $2.5 trillion in economic costs.[89] Seat belts serve as the first line of defense against injury or death for vehicle occupants when crashes occur. According to NHTSA, the combination of an airbag plus a lap and shoulder belt reduces the risk of death in frontal crashes by 61 percent.[90] Sadly, for passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in 2023, it is estimated that nearly half (49 percent) were unrestrained.[91]

Seat belt reminder systems have been proven to improve seat belt use and save lives.[92] Congress as part of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) directed NHTSA to amend federal safety standards to require these systems in the rear seats of passenger vehicles (previously these systems were only required for the front driver's seat although most automakers also equipped the front passenger seat).[93] NHTSA recently issued a Final Rule requiring a seat belt use warning system for rear seats by September 1, 2027. The rule also updates and enhances the current seat belt warning requirements for the driver's seatbelt and extends these requirements to the front outboard passenger seat by September 1, 2026.[94] We urge the Committee to conduct oversight to ensure it is implemented without delay to improve vehicle occupant safety.

Distracted Driving

Crashes in which at least one driver was identified as being distracted imposed an economic cost of $98.2 billion in 2019.[95] Adjusted for inflation only, that amounts to $123.9 billion in 2025 dollars.[96] In 2018, distracted driving crashes cost employers nearly $19 billion.[97]

Driver distraction is known to be a major contributor to motor vehicle crashes.[98] However, the true impact of distracted driving remains unclear due to issues with the underreporting of crashes involving distraction, including differences in police crash report coding and database limitations.[99]

In 2023, over two trillion text and multimedia messages were sent or received in the U.S. Mobile wireless data traffic has risen dramatically over the last decade, from 3 trillion megabytes in 2010 to 100.1 trillion in 2023.[100] Research has shown that because of the degree of cognitive distraction these devices cause, the behavior of drivers using mobile phones (whether handheld or hands-free) is equivalent to the behavior of drivers at the threshold of the legal limit for alcohol in most states (0.08 percent BAC).[101] Crash risk increases dramatically – as much as four times higher – when a driver is using a mobile phone, with no significant safety difference between handheld and hands-free phones observed in many studies.[102] A study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute found

that text messaging increased the risk of a safety-critical driving event (i.e., crashes, near-crashes, crash-relevant conflicts and unintentional lane deviations) by 23.2 times.[103] Sending or receiving a text message causes the driver's eyes to be off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. When driving 55 miles per hour (mph), this is the equivalent of driving the entire length of a football field with one's eyes closed.[104]

The IIJA directed U.S. DOT to conduct research regarding the installation and use of driver support systems, also known as driver monitoring systems, to minimize or eliminate driver distraction and automation complacency within three years and report to Congress within six months of the completion of the research.[105] The Euro NCAP is already evaluating these systems including for non-fatigue impairment detection.[106] In addition, several major automakers include some type of driver monitoring/ driver support technologies in their vehicles sold in the U.S.[107]

Vulnerable Road User (VRU) Safety
Crashes involving pedestrians resulted in $17.6 billion in economic costs and $112.5 billion in comprehensive costs in 2019.[108] Accounting for inflation alone, this would equate to $22.2 billion in economic costs and $142 billion in comprehensive costs in 2025.[109] Crashes involving bicyclists resulted in $5.6 billion in economic costs and $32.2 billion in comprehensive costs in 2019.[110] Accounting for inflation alone, this would equate to $7 billion in economic costs and $40.6 billion in comprehensive costs in 2025.[111]

Lack of conspicuity is a roadway safety issue, especially for VRUs. Of the 7,314 pedestrians killed in traffic crashes in 2023, 77 percent occurred in dark conditions.[112] Also in 2023, there were 1,166 pedalcyclists fatalities, and 53 percent occurred in dark conditions.[113] Improvements to vehicle lighting would afford drivers additional time to identify and respond accordingly to pedestrians, bicycle riders and other VRUs in the roadway. The IIJA directed U.S. DOT to issue a Final Rule updating the headlamp standard (FMVSS 108) and permitting adaptive driving beam (ADB) headlamps within two years. ADB headlights are a lighting technology which uses headlight beam modification to increase illumination of the road while avoiding glare to other traffic. While the U.S. DOT has taken action to allow use of ADB, it should improve the standard and require them.[114] This action has been recommended by the NTSB and others.[115] According to IIHS, 44 percent of headlight systems tested on model year 2024 vehicles earned a good rating.[116] About 23 percent of the systems tested were rated marginal or poor because of inadequate visibility, excessive glare from low beams for oncoming drivers, or both.[117] Ensuring that the U.S. DOT takes action to improve the headlamp standard and advance a requirement should be pursued by the Committee.

Additionally, the IIJA included a provision directing NHTSA to issue a Notice for Public Comment on updating hood and bumper standards for passenger vehicles to "to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities suffered by pedestrians, bicyclists, or other vulnerable road users."[118] In September 2024, NHTSA issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to establish a new FMVSS to ensure passenger vehicles are designed to mitigate

the risks of serious injuries and fatalities in crashes involving pedestrians including children.[119] The standard proposed in the NPRM would save 67 lives annually with the benefits far outpacing the costs by establishing test procedures simulating a head-to-hood impact and performance requirements to minimize the risk of head injury.[120] While this is a step in the right direction, we urge the Committee to ensure that the U.S. DOT pursues a comprehensive upgrade.

Annually, motorcycle crashes cost nearly $17 billion in economic impacts and $107 billion in societal harm as measured by comprehensive costs based on 2019 data.[121] Accounting for inflation alone, in 2025, this would equate to over $21 billion in economic impacts and over $135 billion in societal harm.[122] Serious injuries and fatalities accounted for 83 percent of total comprehensive costs of motorcycle crashes, compared to 60 percent of the total comprehensive costs of all motor vehicle crashes.[123]

Motorcycle riders continue to be overrepresented in fatal traffic crashes.[124] IIHS evaluated on-road data and found motorcycle anti-lock braking systems (ABS) were associated with a 22 percent reduction in the rate of fatal crash involvements.[125] Requiring ABS as standard equipment via a FMVSS on new motorcycles will prevent and mitigate crashes. European Union General Safety Regulation (EU GSR) has required ABS fitment on motorcycles since 2016. IIHS most recently filed a Petition for Rulemaking to require ABS on motorcycles with NHTSA in 2023.[126] We urge the Committee to pursue a standard for this safety improvement in the next surface transportation reauthorization.

Child Passenger Safety
Since 1990, over 1,100 unattended children have been killed in "hot cars," and 7,500 more have been injured.[127] Cost effective technology exists to prevent these tragedies now. The IIJA directed U.S. DOT to issue a Final Rule within two years requiring all new passenger motor vehicles weighing less than 10,000 pounds to be equipped with a system to alert the operator to check rear-designated seating positions after the vehicle engine or motor is deactivated by the operator. The U.S. DOT has not taken regulatory action and should issue a Final Rule which requires the system to detect occupants in the entire passenger compartment rather than rely on reminder systems which are less effective. Of note, Euro New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) added testing of child detection systems in 2023 (protocol), and from 2025 onwards will only be assigning points for direct sensing systems.[128] We urge the Committee to direct U.S. DOT to comprehensively elevate NCAP and minimally adopt protocols from global NCAPs which have advanced beyond the U.S. program.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. We look forward to working with you to address the public health crisis of motor vehicle crashes.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase
President

cc: Members of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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[22] *Id*.
[23] Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. 117-58 (Nov. 15, 2021).
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