

May 20, 2026

The Honorable Brett Guthrie, Chair
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Guthrie and Ranking Member Pallone:

As the Committee on Energy and Commerce commences consideration of the Motor Vehicle Modernization Act of 2026, the undersigned urge this Committee to advance known solutions to reduce the death and injury toll on our Nation's roads.¹

Motor Vehicle Deaths Remain Historically High

On average, 108 people were killed every day on roads in the U.S., totaling nearly 39,254 fatalities in 2024.² This is a 20 percent increase in deaths in just a decade.³ An additional 2.42 million people were injured.⁴ Early projections for 2025 traffic fatalities remain at a similar historic high level; over 36,000 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 \$1.81 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.

The Motor Vehicle Modernization Act of 2026

The undersigned laud the Committee for including numerous provisions in the legislation which will help to improve public safety. These include several measures to protect vulnerable road users including enhancing the automatic emergency braking (AEB) standard which a recent poll commissioned by Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety found was supported by 73 percent of respondents, increasing to 91 percent among those with a stated position.¹⁰ Moreover, provisions to provide consumers with accurate information on the capabilities of partially automated driving systems, modernize vehicle identification numbers (VINs), expedite rulemakings for motor vehicle safety standards, conduct research on driver distraction and other safety concerns, and improve recall repair rates are important to reducing crashes and saving lives. In addition, the undersigned urge the Committee to continue advancing policies to address the leading causes of crashes including impaired and distracted driving, speeding and occupant protection.

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

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.”¹¹ In fact, the agency has estimated that from 1968 through 2019, NHTSA’s safety standards have prevented more than 860,000 deaths, 49 million nonfatal injuries and damage to 65 million vehicles.¹² In addition, during that time frame the comprehensive societal benefits amounted to \$17.3 trillion, using 2019 dollars.¹³

In 1991, the enactment of the bipartisan Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991¹⁴ 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. Airbags have saved an estimated 50,457 lives from 1987 to 2017, according to NHTSA.¹⁵

Additional proven lifesaving technologies required as standard equipment in all vehicles in other federal legislation and regulatory proposals have resulted in or promise similar safety benefits. These efforts include: tire pressure monitoring systems;¹⁶ rear outboard 3-point safety belts;¹⁷ electronic stability control;¹⁸ rear safety belt reminder systems;¹⁹ brake transmission interlocks;²⁰ safety belts on motorcoaches;²¹ rear-view cameras;²² safer power window switches;²³ advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS);²⁴ advanced impaired driving prevention technology;²⁵ rear designated seating position alert (hot cars);²⁶ enhanced vehicle hood and bumpers to better protect vulnerable road users;²⁷ and, advanced head lamps.²⁸

NHTSA Must Have Adequate Resources

While traffic fatalities continue to be a public health crisis, the funding for NHTSA’s lifesaving mission has fallen woefully short for more than four decades as costs and statutory responsibilities have increased. While 95 percent of transportation-related fatalities involve motor vehicles, NHTSA historically receives only one percent of the overall U.S. DOT budget. The agency must be sufficiently funded to meet its many challenges, including funding essential initiatives such as an effective New Car Assessment Program (NCAP).

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve safety on our Nation’s roadways.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety
Center for Auto Safety
Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways
Consumer Federation of America
Consumer Reports
Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety
Kids and Car Safety
League of American Bicyclists
Parents Against Tired Truckers
Trauma Foundation
Truck Safety Coalition

-
- ¹ Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Pub. L. 109-59 (Aug. 10, 2005); Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act, Pub. L. 112-141 (Jan. 3, 2012); Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), Pub. L. 114-94 (Dec. 4, 2015); Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. 117-58 (Nov. 15, 2021).
- ² Traffic Safety Facts: Research Note: Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2024, NHTSA, DOT HS 813 791, Apr. 2026
- ³ Traffic Safety Facts 2023: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Data, NHTSA, DOT HS 813 738, Aug. 2025 Traffic Safety Facts: Research Note: Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2024, NHTSA, DOT HS 813 791, Apr. 2026; and Traffic Safety Facts 2023: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Data, NHTSA, DOT HS 813 738, Aug. 2025. [comparing 2024 to 2014]
- ⁴ Traffic Safety Facts: Research Note: Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2024, NHTSA, DOT HS 813 791, Apr. 2026
- ⁵ Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats: Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities and Fatality Rate in 2025, NHTSA, DOT HS 813 800, Apr. 2026
- ⁶ The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Dec. 2022, DOT HS 813 403. (Economic and Societal Impact 2019).
- ⁷ Economic and Societal Impact 2019.
- ⁸ CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, available at https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm, calculated from Jan. 2019 – Jan. 2026.
- ⁹ Cost of Motor Vehicle Crashes to Employers – 2019, Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, March 2021.
- ¹⁰ See: <https://saferoads.org/2026-av-tech-truck-poll/>
- ¹¹ 89 FR 76923, Sep. 19, 2024.
- ¹² Kahane, C. J., & Simons, J. F. (2024, December). Fatalities, injuries, and crashes prevented by vehicle safety technologies and associated FMVSS, 1968 to 2019 – Passenger cars and LTVs (Report No. DOT HS 813 611). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- ¹³ NHTSA: 50 Years of Vehicle Safety Standards Saved Hundreds of Thousands of Lives, Prevented Millions of Injuries. Pub. L. 102-240 (Dec. 18, 1991).
- ¹⁴ Pub. L. 102-240 (Dec. 18, 1991).
- ¹⁵ Traffic Safety Facts 2018, A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data, DOT HS 812 981, NHTSA (Nov. 2020).
- ¹⁶ Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and Documentation (TREAD) Act, Pub. L. 106-414 (Nov. 1, 2000).
- ¹⁷ Anton’s Law, Pub. L. 107-318 (Dec. 4, 2002).
- ¹⁸ Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Pub. L. 109-59 (Aug. 10, 2005).
- ¹⁹ *Id.*
- ²⁰ *Id.*
- ²¹ Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act, Pub. L. 112-141 (Jan. 3, 2012).
- ²² Cameron Gulbransen Kids Transportation Safety Act of 2007, Pub. L. 110-189 (Feb. 28, 2008).
- ²³ *Id.*
- ²⁴ Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. 117-58 (Nov. 15, 2021).
- ²⁵ *Id.*
- ²⁶ *Id.*
- ²⁷ *Id.*
- ²⁸ *Id.*