

July 14, 2017

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen, Chairman
The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

As the Committee prepares for the mark-up of the FY 2018 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations Bill, our broad and diverse coalition urges you to oppose any provisions and amendments that would roll back current federal and state truck safety laws and regulations. These include increasing federal truck size and weight limits nationwide or establishing so-called multi-state “pilot programs”; preempting states by allowing oversized trucks pulling double 33 ft. trailers or “Double 33s” nationwide; eliminating state requirements for rest periods for truck drivers to address fatigue; exempting electronic logging requirements for truck drivers to ensure compliance with on duty driving hours; and, any special interest exemptions from truck safety laws for specific states, specific industries or specific roads including the provision increasing weights on North Dakota’s interstate highway system to 129,000 lbs. Overweight, oversized trucks driven by overtired drivers are a serious and deadly safety threat to motorists, truck drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists who share the road.

Current trends show that truck crashes are too frequent and too often are fatal. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), in 2015, 4,067 people were needlessly killed in crashes involving large trucks -- a 4 percent increase from 2014 and a 20 percent increase since 2009. This is the highest fatality number and the first time since 2008 that truck crash deaths have exceeded 4,000. Furthermore, truck crash injuries are rising significantly. In 2015, 116,000 people were injured in crashes involving large trucks. This is the largest number of injuries since 2004, and a 57 percent increase since 2009. The annual death and injury toll of truck crashes as well as the upward trends are completely unacceptable and would never be tolerated in any other mode of transportation, nor would special interest attacks on safety rules and laws.

Additionally, our nation’s roads and bridges continue to deteriorate having received a grade of “D” from the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). The 2017 ASCE report, released on March 9, 2017, found that one of every five miles of highway pavement is in poor condition and that one in eleven of the nation’s 615,000 bridges are structurally deficient. There is a growing and substantial backlog of rehabilitation needs across the country. Numerous studies show that bigger trucks inflict even bigger damage to roads and bridges.

Prior attempts in the last Congressional session to increase truck size and weight limits were defeated by both the Senate and the House in strong bipartisan votes. Furthermore, Congress directed the U.S. DOT to conduct a Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study in the 2012 MAP-21 law (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), Pub. L. 112-141).

Last April, the U.S. DOT transmitted the completed study to Congress. The key agency recommendation was that there should be no changes to federal truck size and weight laws. In addition to documented safety and infrastructure problems, the American public consistently and overwhelmingly rejects bigger and heavier trucks. Countless public opinion polls show that the public does not want oversized and overweight trucks on the road and with good reason. In fatal two-vehicle crashes involving a truck and a passenger vehicle, 97 percent of the deaths are the occupants of the passenger vehicle.

Efforts to seriously reduce truck crash deaths and injuries and improve highway safety will not be achieved by relentless attacks and rollbacks of reasonable and commonsense safety laws. We strongly urge you to reject all amendments and provisions in the FY2018 THUD bill to allow bigger, heavier and longer trucks and to repeal laws and regulations ensuring driver rest breaks and electronic documentation of driving hours.

Sincerely,

Joan Claybrook, Chair
Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways and
Former Administrator, National Highway
Traffic Safety Administration

Jacqueline Gillan, President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Georges C. Benjamin, MD, Executive Director
American Public Health Association

John Lannen, Executive Director
Truck Safety Coalition

Dominick L. Stokes
Vice President for Legislative Affairs
Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association

Leah Shahum, Director
Vision Zero Network

Daphne Izer, Founder
Parents Against Tired Truckers (PATT)

Steve Owings, Co-Founder
Road Safe America

Dave Tennent, Executive Director and CEO
Railway Engineering-Maintenance Suppliers
Association

James P. Hoffa, General President
International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Veronica Vanterpool, Executive Director
Tri-State (NY, NJ, CT) Transportation Campaign

Renee Langiotti
Voorhees, NJ
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Daughter of Susan Bartholomay
Killed in a truck crash 3/11/15
Step-father Roger Bartholomay critically injured

Thomas D. Simpson, President
Railway Supply Institute

John Risch, National Legislative Director
SMART-TD (UTU)

Karen Wiley, MSN, RN, CEN, 2017 President
Emergency Nurses Association

Linda Bauer Darr, President
American Short Line and Regional Railroad
Association

Paul White, Executive Director
Transportation Alternatives (NYC)

Chuck Baker, President
National Railroad Construction and Maintenance
Association

Andrew McGuire, Executive Director
Trauma Foundation

Michael Brooks, Acting Director
Center for Auto Safety

Linda Wilburn
Weatherford, OK
Board Member, PATT
Mother of Orbie Wilburn
Killed in a truck crash 9/2/02

Gary Wilburn
Weatherford, OK
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Father of Orbie Wilburn
Killed in a truck crash 9/2/02

Larry Liberatore
Severn, MD
Board Member, PATT
Father of Nick Liberatore
Killed in a truck crash 6/9/97

Kate Brown
Gurnee, IL
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Mother of Graham Brown
Injured in a truck crash 5/2/05

Julie Branon Magnan
South Burlington, VT
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Injured in a truck crash 1/31/02
Wife of David Magnan
Killed in a truck crash 1/31/02

Tami Friedrich Trakh
Corona, CA
Board Member, CRASH
Sister of Kris Mercurio, Sister-in-Law of Alan
Mercurio, Aunt of Brandie Rooker & Anthony
Mercurio
Killed in a truck crash 12/27/89

Janette Fennell, Founder and President
KidsAndCars.org

Jack Gillis, Director of Public Affairs
Consumer Federation of America

Ed Slattery
Lutherville, MD
Board Member, PATT
Husband of Susan Slattery
Killed in a truck crash 8/16/10
Sons Matthew & Peter Slattery critically injured

Morgan Lake
Sunderland, MD
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Injured in a truck crash 7/19/13

Peter Malarczyk
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Injured in a truck crash 12/29/15
Son of Ryszard and Anita Malarczyk
Killed in a truck crash 12/29/15

Monica Malarczyk
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Injured in a truck crash 12/29/15
Son of Ryszard and Anita Malarczyk
Killed in a truck crash 12/29/15

Alan Dana
Plattsburgh, NY
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Son of Janet Dana, Uncle of Caitlyn & Lauryn
Dana, Brother-in-law of Laurie Dana
Killed in a truck crash 7/19/12

Michelle Novak
Delevan, NY
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Aunt of Charles "Chuck" Novak
Killed in a truck crash 10/24/10

Santiago Calderon
Arcata, CA
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Injured in a truck crash 4/10/14

Michelle Lemus
Los Angeles, CA
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Injured in a truck crash 4/10/14

cc: Members of the U.S. House Committee on Appropriations