

May 15, 2018

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Chairman  
The Honorable David Price, 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 Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Price:

As you prepare to markup the FY 2019 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations bill, we ask you to oppose any efforts to allow bigger and heavier trucks on our roads including extending the length of double tractor-trailers to 33-feet per trailer, increasing federal truck weight limits or establishing “pilot programs,” and any industry or state specific exemptions. The consequences of bigger and heavier trucks are all too clear. Any increases to truck size and weight will result in more deaths and injuries on our roads, more (even larger) trucks on our roads, more deterioration of our already compromised infrastructure, and more intermodal inefficiency on our nation’s freight network. Our broad and diverse coalition of consumer, health, and safety groups, families of truck crash victims and survivors, law enforcement, first responders, truck drivers, rail labor, short lines and regional railroads, and railway suppliers and contractors urges you to reject any attacks on our current federal truck safety laws as “riders” on an appropriations bill.

Increasing the length of double tractor-trailers by five feet per trailer would result in a configuration that is approximately the size of an 8-story building. These massive trucks would not only be more difficult for other motorists to maneuver around and co-exist on the roadways with but would also be more difficult for truck drivers to operate. For example, “double 33s” traveling at 60 miles per hour require an additional 22 feet to stop compared to existing twin-trailer configurations. Considering crashes in which a truck rear-ends a passenger vehicle have gone up 82 percent from 2009 to 2015, any extra stopping distance will make such crashes more likely and increase the severity of the crashes that are already occurring. Claims that longer trucks will improve safety ignore the facts and defy reality.

Despite misleading assertions to the contrary, longer or heavier trucks will not reduce the number of trucks on our roads or the number of truck vehicles miles traveled or the number of truck crashes. In fact, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) found that any reduction in the number of trucks due to a truck size increase would be offset within a year of implementation. An increase in trailer size or weight limit would divert freight from the rails to trucks, as the latter industry will have a greater capacity to ship via longer or heavier trailers – thereby disrupting and diminishing intermodal efficiency.

Ultimately, taxpayers will bear the burden of costs for repairing and replacing bridges to accommodate longer trucks which would total at least \$1.1 billion according to the U.S. DOT. That astronomical figure would be on top of an already significant investment backlog of \$123.1 billion to address all necessary bridge rehabilitation projects.

Moreover, this policy change will adversely affect both smaller trucking companies and truckload carriers by compelling them to purchase expensive, new equipment in order to remain competitive. It will also endanger truck drivers, which is already one of the most dangerous professions according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Segments of the trucking industry are stating that there is a truck driver shortage. It makes no sense to make this already perilous profession even riskier and less attractive to potential employees.

Likewise, those pushing for pilot programs to permit heavier trucks are similarly disseminating dubious science myths to bolster their claims that a weight increase will improve safety, reduce congestion, and diminish wear and tear on our roads and bridges. Pilot programs result in a patchwork of state laws that makes enforcement and compliance more difficult while compelling states with reasonable truck size and weight limits to succumb to pressure for higher weights and longer trucks – undermining the very purpose of a national standard. Furthermore, in the event a heavier truck is involved in a crash, there is a risk for far greater damage to infrastructure and loss of life.

Each day 12 people are killed and 300 more are injured in crashes involving a large truck, on average. Truck crashes, deaths and injuries have seen staggering increases over recent years. This trend would not be tolerated in any other mode of transportation, and it needs to be eradicated, not compounded. At a time when safety on our roads is going in the wrong direction, we urge you to reject any proposals that would create additional threats to all road users.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President  
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

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

James P. Hoffa, General President  
International Brotherhood of Teamsters

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

Dawn King, President  
Truck Safety Coalition

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

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

Jeff Solheim, 2018 President  
Emergency Nurses Association

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

Steve Owings, Co-Founder & President  
Road Safe America

Brad Roseberry, Vice President  
Coalition Against Bigger Trucks

Jennifer Tierney, Board Member  
CRASH Foundation

E. Michael O'Malley, President  
Railway Supply Institute

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

Stephen W. Hargarten, M.D., MPH  
Society for the Advancement of Violence and  
Injury Research

Jason Levine, Executive Director  
Center for Auto Safety

Jane Mathis  
St. Augustine, FL  
Vice President, TSC  
Board Member, PATT  
Mother of David Mathis  
Mother-in-Law of Mary Kathryn Mathis  
Killed in a truck crash 3/25/04

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

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

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

Alan Dana  
Plattsburgh, NY

Chuck Baker, President  
National Railroad Construction and Maintenance  
Association

Jack Gillis, Director of Public Affairs  
Consumer Federation of America

Daphne Izer, Co-Chair  
Parents Against Tired Truckers

Andrew McGuire, Executive Director  
Trauma Foundation

Janette Fennell, Founder and President  
KidsAndCars.org

Jackie Novak  
Hendersonville, NC  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Mother of Charles "Chuck" Novak  
Killed in a truck crash 10/24/10

Paul Badger  
Davidson, NC  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Son of Bill Badger  
Killed in truck crash 12/23/04

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

Kim Telep  
Harrisburg, PA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Wife of Bradley Telep  
Killed in a truck crash 8/29/12

Amy Fletcher  
Perrysburg, OH  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Wife of John Fletcher  
Killed in a truck crash 1/24/12

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  
Beth Badger  
Columbus, GA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Daughter of Bill Badger  
Killed in truck crash 12/23/04

Vickie Johnson  
Hartwell, GA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Wife of Curt Johnson, Step-mother of Crystal  
Johnson  
Killed in a truck crash 10/1/09

Marc Johnson  
Hartwell, GA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Brother of Curt Johnson  
Killed in truck crash 10/1/09

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

Nancy Meuleners  
Bloomington, MN  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 12/19/89

Steve Izer  
Lisbon, ME  
Board Member, PATT  
Father of Jeff Izer  
Killed in a truck crash 10/10/93

Melissa Gouge  
Washington, D.C.  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Cousin of Amy Corbin  
Killed in a truck crash 8/18/97

Debra Cruz  
Harlingen, TX  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 8/8/08  
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

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

Tina Silva  
Ontario, CA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Sister of Kris Mercurio, Sister-in-Law of Alan  
Mercurio, Aunt of Brandie Rooker & Anthony  
Mercurio  
Killed in a truck crash 12/27/89

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

Wanda Lindsay  
New Braunfels, TX  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Wife of John Lindsay  
Killed in a truck crash 5/7/10

Warren Huffman  
Odessa, MI  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Brother of Tim Huffman  
Killed in a truck crash 5/6/13

Tammy Huffman  
Odessa, MI  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Sister-in-law of Tim Huffman

Morgan Lake  
Sunderland, MD  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 7/19/13  
Randall Higginbotham  
Memphis, TN  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Father of Michael Higginbotham  
Killed in a truck crash, 11/18/14

Cindy Southern  
Cleveland, TN  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Wife of James Whitaker, sister-in-law Anthony  
Hixon and aunt of Amber Hixon  
Killed in a truck crash 9/18/09

Marchelle Wood  
Falls Church, VA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Mother of Dana Wood  
Killed in a truck crash 10/15/02

Sandra Lance  
Chesterfield, VA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Mother of Kristen Belair  
Killed in a truck crash 8/26/09

Frank Wood  
Falls Church, VA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Father of Dana Wood  
Killed in a truck crash 10/15/02

Ashley McMillan  
Memphis, TN  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Girlfriend of Michael Higginbotham  
Killed in a truck crash 11/18/14

Christina Mahaney  
Jackman, ME  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 7/19/11  
Mother of Liam Mahaney

Killed in a truck crash 5/6/13

Bruce King  
Davisburg, MI  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Son-in-law of Bill Badger  
Killed in truck crash 12/23/04

Lisa Shrum  
Fayette, MO  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Daughter of Virginia Baker, Step-daughter of  
Randy Baker  
Killed in a truck crash 10/10/06

Ron Wood  
Washington, D.C.  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Son of Betsy Wood, Brother of Lisa Wood Martin,  
Uncle of Chance, Brock, and Reid Martin  
Killed in a truck crash 9/20/04

Laurie Higginbotham  
Memphis, TN  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Mother of Michael Higginbotham  
Killed in a truck crash, 11/18/14

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 in  
a truck crash 8/16/10

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

Julie Branon Magnan  
South Burlington, VT

Killed in a truck crash 7/19/11

Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition

Injured in a truck crash 01/31/02

Wife of David Magnan

Killed in a truck crash 01/31/02