

June 4, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Susan Collins, Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Jack Reed, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Collins and Ranking Member Reed:

In preparation for this week's markups of the FY 2019 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to reject any proposals that would open our roads and highways to bigger and heavier trucks. These efforts include forcing all states to allow a configuration known as "Double 33s" (double tractor-trailers hauling two 33-foot trailers) as well as increasing federal truck weight limits, including creating "pilot programs" and industry or state specific exemptions. Moreover, we are adamantly opposed to any language that would solicit unsubstantiated "findings" on the impact of Double 33s¹. Proponents of these longer trucks have been peddling self-funded and self-serving "research" on this issue that distorts facts and skews realities in furtherance of their efforts. Allowing this junk science to infiltrate major policy discussions under the guise of "findings" would be disastrous for safety. Truck crashes are already all-too-frequent and all-too-deadly. Based on averages, before today is over more than 10 people will be killed and 300 others will be injured in a crash involving a large truck. Making trucks even larger and heavier will add to this unacceptable death and injury toll.

Bigger and Heavier Trucks Impose a Heavy Safety Toll. There were 4,317 people killed in large truck crashes in 2016 – the highest number since 2007 – and an additional 145,000 more were injured. Alarming, truck crashes, deaths and injuries have risen dramatically in recent years. In two-vehicle crashes involving a large truck and a passenger vehicle, 97% of the fatalities are in the passenger vehicle. This needless carnage would not be accepted in any other mode of transportation. Yet, despite this grim reality on our roads, special trucking interests want to unleash bigger and heavier trucks on the public – which have even bigger safety problems. Double trailer trucks have an 11% higher fatal crash rate than single trailer trucks. Double 33s, which are essentially an eight-story office building on wheels, take more time to pass, will cross into adjacent lanes, interfere with traffic, swing into opposing lanes on curves and when making right-angle turns, and will pose an even greater danger as they enter and exit highways and travel on local roads. Further, tractor-trailers traveling at 60 miles per hour are required to stop in 310 feet – approximately the length of a football field – once the brakes are applied. However, actual stopping distances are much longer both due to driver response time and the common problem that truck brakes are often not in top working condition. Not only

¹ U.S. House Appropriations Committee Fiscal Year 2019 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Funding Bill, Amendment offered by Rep. Fleischmann

could crashes involving heavier and longer trucks be more likely to happen, but they also would likely be more severe given the sheer mass and size.

Larger Trucks = Larger Costs for Infrastructure and Taxpayers. Truck crashes already impose an enormous economic cost. The cost to society from crashes involving a commercial motor vehicle was estimated to be \$118 billion in 2015 alone. Both Congress and the Administration have made clear that significant investment in our infrastructure is a shared goal – and rightly so. America’s roads not only receive a “D” from the American Society of Civil Engineers, but also 20% of the Nation’s highways had poor pavement conditions in 2014. Further, in 2016 one in 11 of the nearly 615,000 bridges in the National Bridge Inventory was structurally deficient. It is estimated that over \$140 billion in capital investment would be needed on an annual basis over the next two decades to significantly improve conditions and performance. Increasing truck size and weight would undermine critically-needed infrastructure improvements and only further degrade our already-crumbling infrastructure. For instance, increasing the weight of a heavy truck by only 10% increases bridge damage by 33%. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study found that introducing Double 33s is projected to result in nearly 2,500 bridges that would need strengthening or replacement – amounting to an estimated one-time cost of over \$1 billion. Increasing the strain and inflicting even more damage on our roads and bridges runs counter to the objective of improving our infrastructure.

There is Widespread Opposition to Increasing Truck Size and Weight. In addition to our coalition of safety, consumer and public health groups, law enforcement and first responders, truck drivers and labor representatives, and families of truck crash victims and survivors, there is broad and diverse opposition to allowing bigger and heavier trucks. Not only did proposals fail in the last Congress to increase truck size and weight in both the Senate and the House, but the U.S. DOT also recommended that no changes be made to current law. And, public opinion polls are clear and consistent – Americans strongly oppose bigger trucks.

Proponents of these dangerous proposals often assert the misleading and debunked claim that bigger trucks will reduce the number of trucks on our roads – thereby improving safety and efficiency. History and experience tell us that simply is not true. Furthermore, it doesn’t take into account diversion that will take freight off railroads and onto trucks or the expected increases in freight as shipping demand grows. The U.S. DOT even addressed this point specifically, finding that any reduction in the number of trucks that occurred after a truck size increase would be wiped out within just one year. Double 33s will also disrupt current trucking operations by compelling smaller trucking companies and truckload carriers to purchase new equipment in order to remain competitive. Truck drivers have expressed serious concern with driving longer and heavier trucks because of the safety implications. Driving a truck is already one of the most dangerous professions and segments of the trucking industry claim that there is a shortage of truck drivers. Making an already-precarious job even more perilous is nonsensical.

We urge you to reject any anti-safety truck riders to the FY19 THUD bill. They will pose major problems for safety and infrastructure, and they have no place being included on a funding bill that will provide important investments in transportation. We urge you to reject any language

that would result in bigger and heavier trucks which will jeopardize not only our crumbling roads and bridges but also imperil all road users.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

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)

Jack Gillis, Director of Public Affairs
Consumer Federation of America

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

Rosemary Shahan, President
Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety

Jennifer Tierney, Board Member
CRASH Foundation

Janette Fennell, Founder and President
KidsAndCars.org

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

James P. Hoffa, General President
International Brotherhood of Teamsters

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

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

Leah Shahum, Founder and Director
Vision Zero Network

Dawn King, President
Truck Safety Coalition

Jason Levine, Executive Director
Center for Auto Safety

Steve Owings, Co-Founder & President
Road Safe America

Sally Greenberg, Executive Director
National Consumers League

Andrew McGuire, Executive Director
Trauma Foundation

Daphne Izer, Founder and Co-Chair
Parents Against Tired Truckers (PATT)

Julie Branon Magnan
South Burlington, VT
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Injured in a truck crash 01/31/02
Wife of David Magnan
Killed in a truck crash 01/31/02

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 7/19/11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

John Ramsey
Edneyville, NC
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition

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

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

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

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

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

Henry Steck
Homer, NY
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition

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

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