

March 14, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Chairman, Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden  
Ranking Member, Energy and Commerce  
2322 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky  
Chairwoman, CPAC Subcommittee  
2367 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Ranking Member, CPAC Subcommittee  
1035 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Walden, Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

Thank you for holding today's hearing on the critical issue of drunk driving fatalities on U.S. roadways. Sadly, this hearing remains very timely due to the continued deaths on our roads.

Securing America's Future Energy (SAFE) appreciates the opportunity to submit this letter of record. SAFE is a nonpartisan nonprofit committed to reducing U.S. oil dependence to improve U.S. economic and national security. It is our belief that technology innovation holds enormous potential for increasing roadway safety while expediting the United States' ability to reduce oil dependence by improving efficiency and diversifying fuel choice in our transportation sector.

The United States is in the midst of a public health crisis that has been unfolding on our highways, country roads, and city streets for more than a century. In 2018, for the third straight year, 40,000 American lives were lost on our roadways.<sup>1</sup> Of those, 10,000 were connected to drunk driving collisions.<sup>2</sup> This amounts to nothing less than a national tragedy that must be addressed by deploying the lifesaving technologies that are available to us today and in the future.

Traffic deaths are pervasive and indiscriminate. Every day, we lose nearly 100 Americans from all walks of life: urban and rural, male and female, working class and white collar. The only constant is that 94 percent of these fatal collisions are caused by human error or choice. Driving under the influence has long been one of the top causes of these collisions.<sup>3</sup>

Roadway safety is impacted by numerous factors including human behavior, roadway and vehicle design, and the observation and enforcement of highway laws. While there is no silver bullet that can immediately eliminate all roadway fatalities, SAFE believes that implementing the suite of commercially-available driver-assist and crash-avoidance technologies will offer immediate benefits by saving lives,

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<sup>1</sup> National Safety Council, "[Vehicle Deaths Estimated at 40,000 for Third Straight Year.](#)" NSC.org, February 13, 2019

<sup>2</sup> National Safety Council, "[Impairment Begins With the First Drink.](#)" NSC.org.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

while also accelerating the safe and expeditious deployment of autonomous vehicles (AVs), is one of the best pathways to address this public health crisis.

In the near-term, advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) and crash-avoidance technologies stand to enable a meaningful reduction in roadway fatalities related to non-impaired collisions. A Boston Consulting Group study found that ADAS features and sensor technologies could save 9,900 lives every year in the United States, if deployed today.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, these technologies hold the potential for system-wide fuel economy savings of up to 18-25 percent.<sup>5</sup>

Crucially, these technologies form the foundation of autonomous driving. By automating the task of driving, we will have the opportunity to dramatically reduce the number of collisions that are caused by human factors. Unlike humans, AVs are not capable of driving under the influence and are being programmed to drive safely and responsibly.

In addition to the human toll of our current transportation network, Americans also shoulder tremendous social and economic costs of crashes every year. Our research has found that, even under a conservative methodology in which we assume AVs would only address crashes caused by gross driver error (e.g., alcohol, speeding, and distraction), the annual benefits of AVs would exceed \$500 billion by 2050.<sup>6</sup>

In the previous Congress, this subcommittee took a vital step toward improving roadway safety by advancing the SELF DRIVE Act (H.R. 3388). Regrettably, it was not enacted into law. SELF DRIVE would have established a regulatory framework to spur the safe deployment of AVs while ensuring that the full range of benefits would be realized by all Americans – including the millions of seniors, people with disabilities, and wounded veterans who experience significant mobility challenges daily.

We would like to thank the subcommittee for its leadership on the SELF DRIVE Act in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress and strongly urge you to expediently consider and pass similar legislation this year to ensure that Americans are able to realize the full safety benefits of AVs as soon as possible. The status quo – 40,000 American lives lost every year and millions more injured – is unacceptable and the costs are far too great to delay action. We look forward to working with you, your colleagues, and fellow stakeholders to accelerate the adoption of lifesaving vehicle technologies.

Thank you,



Robbie Diamond  
President and CEO  
Securing America's Future Energy

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<sup>4</sup> Xavier Mosquet, Michelle Andersen and Aakash Arora, "[A Roadmap to Safer Driving Through Advanced Driver Assistance Systems.](#)" Boston Consulting Group, September 2015

<sup>5</sup> Amitai Bin-Nun and Jeff Gerlach, "[Using Fuel Efficiency Regulations to Conserve Fuel and Save Lives by Accelerating Industry Investment in Autonomous and Connected Vehicles.](#)" Securing America's Future Energy, April 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Amitai Bin-Nun, Jeff Gerlach and Alex Adams, "[America's Workforce and the Self-Driving Future.](#)" Securing America's Future Energy, June 2018