



STATEMENT OF

**Georges Benjamin, MD, FACP, FNAPA, FACEP (E), Hon. FRSPH, Executive Director
American Public Health Association**

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Good morning. I am Dr. Georges Benjamin, Executive Director of the American Public Health Association (APHA). APHA champions the health of all people and all communities. We strengthen the profession of public health, share the latest research and information, promote best practices and advocate for public health issues and policies grounded in research. We are the only organization that combines a 140-plus year perspective, a broad-based member community and the ability to influence federal policy to improve the public's health.

Throughout my career as former Health Secretary for the State of Maryland, an emergency physician and a representative of public health professionals, I have been very concerned about the public health epidemic that is plaguing our nation's roads. Coincidentally, this is National Public Health Week. One of the goals of National Public Health Week is to raise awareness of the importance of preventing disease and injury and promoting wellness. This year's theme, "Public Health: Start Here" testifies to our need to change the way our nation thinks about health – from one that focuses on treatment to one that focuses on prevention.

Highway crashes are an excellent example of a serious and costly public health epidemic that can be mitigated by prevention. In particular, deaths and injuries caused by large trucks are a major contributor to this serious and costly public health problem. In 2012, over 3,500 people were killed and more than 100,000 people were injured in crashes involving large trucks in the United States. And, this number has been steadily on the rise. From 2009 to 2012 the number of people killed in truck crashes has gone up by 16 percent and the number of injured has increased by 40 percent. The annual cost to society from crashes involving commercial motor vehicles is estimated to be over \$83 billion.

Truck crashes are also an occupational hazard. Truck drivers have one of the highest rates of injury and illnesses of all occupations. Unfortunately, truck driver deaths are also on the rise.

The disparity in the size and weight of trucks and cars has deadly consequences. In fatal two-vehicle crashes between a large truck and a passenger motor vehicle, 98 percent of the fatalities are occupants of the passenger vehicle. The bigger the truck the bigger the problem -- 74 percent of those killed in large truck crashes in 2012 were crashes involving tractor trailers.

The public health community recognizes that moving goods by truck is an essential part of our nation's freight transportation system. However, the economic and emotional toll of truck crashes is unnecessary and unacceptable. Compared to other modes of freight transportation the mortality and morbidity toll is

staggering. Truck transportation is responsible for 3 out of 4 freight transportation-related fatalities and 9 of 10 injuries.

The tragic and life-altering consequences of large truck crashes are predictable, perilous and preventable. We can and must do more to protect truck drivers and the motoring public. Allowing trucks to become heavier and bigger is clearly not the answer to reducing crashes, deaths and injuries. I am here today to lend my support to efforts by Members of Congress, truck crash victims and survivors, truck drivers, law enforcement and academics to prevent truck crashes and oppose changes in federal law that will lead to more deaths and injuries.

Thank you.