

## **STATEMENT OF SANTIAGO CALDERON**

**October 19, 2015**

**Hello. My name is Santiago Calderon and I am a sophomore at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. With me is Michelle Lemus from Los Angeles.**

**On April 10, 2014, I was an Oxnard High School senior headed to Humboldt State for a tour as part of their Preview Plus program along with 43 other Southern California high school students, including Michelle. I was excited; for me, and several of my friends on the bus, this trip was the start of something new. For me, it was really special because it would be the first time that someone from my family would be attending college. What started out to be a great trip representing a new beginning, my life changed instantly when a FedEx double tractor trailer crashed into our bus.**

**I remember waking up and seeing the truck coming right at us, hoping it would stop or swerve, but knowing it wouldn't. The truck then crashed into the front, left side of the bus, killing five students and five others, including our three chaperones. The images of fire and smoke have been forever seared into my memory as clearly as the picture behind me. While I struggle with the memories of the crash, I also recognize that I am one of the lucky ones. But I am not just standing here because I am lucky – I am standing here for them.**

**Calls in Congress to increase truck size and weight are dangerous and will only perpetuate truck crashes like the one that I endured. Since the crash, I have learned a lot about the**

safety problems with bigger trucks. They have a higher crash rate and lots of other issues like braking, passing and swinging into other lanes of traffic. From what I see, the proposal to make trucks longer and heavier will actually make large crashes more frequent and more fatal.

The truck that hit our bus was a FedEx truck pulling two trailers that I later found out were 28 feet long. Now, FedEx and others want to make these trucks even longer by adding an extra 5 feet to each trailer making them 33 feet each. This would make a truck that is at least 84 feet long, the size of an eight story office building. Lengthening double tractor trailers will result in a 22 foot longer stopping distance. I urge you to think about me, and Michelle, and my other friends who survived who may not have been so lucky if the truck went 22 feet farther into our bus.

It is clear that this is a bad idea, and lots of people agree. Strong opposition is mounting from diverse groups like law enforcement, public health and safety groups, state governments and officials and trucking companies. In fact, recently I heard that the Truckload Carriers Association voted to oppose double 33s. We shouldn't be letting the priorities of a select few companies outweigh the safety risks and the wide range of groups and people who are against this change.

I know that in D.C. truck size and weight is a big issue that Members of Congress and the Department of Transportation have been looking at for a while. In addition to the push for double 33s, there is another proposal being considered that would increase the federal

**weight limit of large truck from 80,000 pounds to 91,000 pounds. The Department of Transportation actually just came out this year and said that there was insufficient data to make changes to truck size and weight laws. But there are still some Members of Congress who continue to prioritize the profits of the few companies over the lives of the many people. Bigger trucks would be a disaster for safety. And, the public has said loud and clear that they don't want trucks to be bigger. Earlier this year almost 80% of respondents to a public poll opposed increasing truck size and weight. I urge Congress to listen to the voters who elected them and stop succumbing to the special interests who are pushing these dangerous proposals.**

**History proves that time and time again size and weight increases never result in fewer trucks on our roads. In fact, between 1980 and 2013 the amount of large trucks in the United States has increased by 83 percent. This massive surge occurred despite the trucking industry promising that truck size and weight increases would result in fewer trucks. It is time to reject the same faulty argument that the industry keeps advancing. It is time to get this right and put safety first. And it is time to get to work stopping crashes like the one I was involved in that needlessly kill people, and forever change the lives of friends and families. Thank you.**