



April 30, 2021

The Honorable Richard Durbin
The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cheri Bustos
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Sen. Durbin, Sen. Duckworth and Rep. Bustos,

We are writing to commend your determined leadership and dedication to improving safety on our roads with the recent introduction of the *Protecting Roadside First Responders* (S.1386, H.R.2868). When this lifesaving bill is enacted into law and the safety reforms are implemented, we will finally realize significant and sustained reductions in highway crashes, deaths, injuries, and costs. As survivors of large truck crashes, as well as family members whose loved ones were needlessly killed or injured in a large truck crash, we share your goal of advancing laws and government regulations to achieve safer vehicles, safer drivers, and safer roads for everyone.

The annual death and injury toll of truck crashes in the United States is staggering. In the past year alone, more than 5,000 people were killed in truck crashes, representing a 46 percent increase since 2009. Additionally, nearly 150,000 were injured. In fatal crashes involving a large truck and passenger vehicle, 96 percent of fatalities were car occupants, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). The annual cost of truck crashes exceeds \$143 billion. These crashes impose both a steep emotional and economic cost on our society.

This is a critical time in our country for highway and auto safety. Cost-effective and commonsense solutions are available now, but unfortunately, they are not being required. Your legislation changes that. Equipping trucks with crash avoidance technologies like automatic emergency braking (AEB) and forward collision warning (FCW) systems could eliminate more than two out of five crashes in which a large truck rear-ends another vehicle, according to IIHS research.

An essential feature of your legislation is requiring these safety technologies as standard equipment on all new vehicles – all trucks, buses, and cars. For years, and more recently in April, the National Transportation Safety Board has recommended that these crash avoidance systems be universally required. At a time when we are acknowledging transportation inequities across the country, your legislation is a major step towards addressing safety

inequities. There should be no winners and losers in providing this safety “vaccine” on our neighborhood streets and highways, no matter the efforts made by special trucking interests and others to be excluded from the requirements.

Your commitment to advancing comprehensive solutions to stop the unnecessary and unacceptable carnage on our roads is greatly appreciated. Our families are committed to working with you to enact this vital legislation to prevent others from suffering pain and loss because of a preventable truck crash.

Sincerely,

Dawn King, President, Truck Safety Coalition & Board Member, Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH). (*Michigan*)

Dawn’s father, Bill Badger, was killed in 2004 while slowed in traffic when he was hit from behind by a semi driver who had fallen asleep at the wheel.

Daphne and Steve Izer, Founders and Co-Chair, Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.) & Board Members, Truck Safety Coalition. (*Maine*)

Daphne and Steve’s son, Jeff, and three of his friends were killed in 1993 when a semi driver fell asleep at the wheel and ran over the car as it was parked on the shoulder.

Russell Swift, Co-Chair, P.A.T.T. & Board Member, Truck Safety Coalition (*Maine*)

Russ’s son, Jasen, was killed instantly, as was a fellow Marine, while they drove in the dark to work in 1993, by a 17-year-old truck driver & without a permit whose truck was stuck across two lanes after trying a U-turn, causing the car to drive into and under the side of the trailer.

Jane Mathis, Vice President, Truck Safety Coalition & Board Member, P.A.T.T. (*Florida*)

Jane’s 23-year-old son, David, and his bride, Mary Kathryn, were killed while on their way home from their honeymoon in 2004 when they were stopped in traffic and hit from behind by a semi whose driver fell asleep at the wheel. The car became wedged under the truck, then exploded.

Jennifer M. Tierney, Board Member, CRASH & Truck Safety Coalition. (*North Carolina*)

Jennifer’s father, James Mooney, was killed on a dark, rural road in 1983 when he crashed into a truck with no visible lights blocking the roadway.

Tami Friedrich Trakh, Board Member, CRASH & Truck Safety Coalition. (*California*)

Tami’s sister, Kris, brother-in-law, Alan, and two of their children, Brandie and Anthony, were killed in 1989 when a tanker truck overturned in front of them and exploded.

Nikki Weingartner, Board Member, P.A.T.T. & Truck Safety Coalition. (*Hawaii*)

Nikki’s husband, Virgil Hensley, was killed in 1997 when a truck driver ran a stop sign at an intersection, killing him instantly.

Linda Wilburn, Board Member, P.A.T.T. & Truck Safety Coalition. (*Oklahoma*)

Linda and Gary Wilburn’s son, Orbie, was killed in 2002 when a tired truck driver slammed into his car.

Brenda and Chuck Young (*Kentucky*)

Brenda and Chuck are parents of Detective Deidre Mengedoht, who was killed as a **first responder** in December 2018 when a semi-truck hit her cruiser which was stopped on the side of the I-64, sending her into the disabled pickup truck in front of her. Her cruiser burst into flames and Detective Mengedoht was killed.

Eileen Kosc (*Delaware*)

Eileen was driving home from the beach in slow traffic in 2013 with her sons, Brandon and Bryan, when she was struck from behind by an **inattentive box truck driver who** failed to slow down. The truck continued on to hit four other vehicles before coming to a stop. Eileen and Brandon were taken to the hospital with injuries. Bryan did not survive. Bryan was 7 years old.

Ed Slattery (*Maryland*)

Ed's wife, Susan, was killed, and his sons, Peter and Matthew, were severely injured in 2010 when they were rear-ended by a truck driver who fell asleep. Lifetime costs for Matthew's care alone are estimated to be \$35 - \$45 million. Ed's journey since the crash has been documented in the book, *The Long Blink, the true story of trauma, forgiveness, and one man's fight for safer roads*, by award-winning Baltimore reporter and author, Brian Kuebler.

Paula Tolliver (*Ohio*)

On December 7, 2018, Paula's granddaughter, **Teresa Howell, was working on U.S. 33 replacing a guardrail** when a semi driver veered off the road. Teresa was hit and killed. The driver did not stop, and when he was found, he stated he did not realize he had hit anything. The driver of this semi had killed another person in a similar crash less than 6 months prior. Teresa left behind two sons, ages 5 and 6.

Elissa Schee (*Florida*)

Elissa's 13-year-old daughter, Margay, was riding home from school in a **school bus** in 2008 that was struck from behind by a semi and burst into flames.

Larry and Patty Liberatore (*Maryland*)

Larry and Patty Liberatore's son, Nick, was killed in 1997 by a fatigued truck driver who drove his semi over their son's vehicle.

Pamela Biddle (*Georgia*)

In 2017, Pamela's 23-year-old son, Aaron Lee, his father, Brian Lee, and Brian's partner, Stephanie Swaim, were killed when they were stopped in interstate highway traffic caused by a semi with a wheel fire and hit from behind by another semi which failed to slow. The semi driver also perished.

Roy Crawford (*Kentucky*)

Roy's son, Guy Champ Crawford, was killed in 1994 by an **overloaded coal truck** that had poor conspicuity and no underride guards. Roy is a retired forensic engineer who has reconstructed many fatal truck crashes.

Nancy Meuleners (*Minnesota*)

Nancy was severely injured in 1989 when her vehicle slid under the back of a semi stopped in traffic without emergency flashers illuminated. She has had over 40 surgeries to reconstruct her face and mouth and expects there will be more.

Laura and Richard Fredricks (*New Jersey*)

Laura and Richard's daughter, Emily, was killed while riding her bicycle to work in 2017 when a **sanitation truck** turned in front of her.

Catherine DeSalvo (*New Jersey*)

Catherine's husband, Jim, was killed while riding his bike in 2019, when the tire flew off of an **overweight, unmaintained dump truck** and hit him.

Purushottam & Mina K P Panthee (*New York*)

In 2020, Purushottam and Mira's 10-year-old son, Shree, was killed, and Mira has serious, life-threatening injuries, from a collision in a school cross walk with a Queens, NY, **sanitation truck**. In Purushottam's words: "It is not just the physical wounds but she (Mira), along with our whole family, is suffering from mental pain. We are a victim's family and want to request the U.S. government to impose more regulations for truck safety and pedestrian rights to save lives."

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