



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – April 15, 2021

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TODAY: Truck Safety Bill Introduced in Congress to Raise Minimum Insurance for Motor Carriers for First Time in 41 Years.

Victims and Survivors Send Letter Urging Members of Congress to Protect Families from the Financial Hardship of Shouldering the High Costs of Lifelong Medical Care Resulting from a Truck Crash.

MEDIA AVAILABILITY:

Crash victim family members volunteering with the [Truck Safety Coalition](#) are available for media interviews to discuss their personal stories of emotional and economic loss, and the critical need to raise minimum insurance coverage for motor carriers which has been stuck at \$750,000 since 1980.

WHY:

Truck crash survivors and victims' families today sent the following letter to each Member of the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, urging them to enact legislation introduced today by **Rep. Jesus "Chuy" Garcia (D-Chicago, IL)** and several cosponsors to increase the required minimum insurance for trucking companies to catch up with medical cost inflation over the past 41 years. Joining Rep. Garcia as cosponsors of the *Improving National Safety by Updating the Required Amount of Insurance Needed by Motor Vehicles Per Event Act of 2021* (INSURANCE Act) are **Reps. Jared Huffman (D-CA-02), Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr. (D-GA-04), John Garamendi (D-CA-03), Mondaire Jones (D-NY-17), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX-30), Steve Cohen (D-TN-09), Adriano Espaillat (D-NY-13), and Alan Lowenthal (D-CA-47).**

In 1980, Congress established \$750,000 as the minimum insurance requirement for motor carriers to ensure public safety and to measure the financial fitness and responsibility of a motor carrier company entering the business. Over the past four decades, the cost of living rose by more than 200 percent, and the per capita health expenditure jumped from about \$1,000 to approximately \$12,000.

In 2014, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) issued a study concluding that *"the current financial responsibility minimums are inadequate to fully cover the costs of some crashes in light of increased medical costs and revised value of statistical life estimates."* FMCSA soon after issued a proposed rulemaking to increase the minimums, however, the agency withdrew it in 2017.

In 2019, more than 5,000 people were killed in crashes involving large trucks and 159,000 were injured at an economic cost of \$143 billion. Since 2009, truck crash deaths have increased 48 percent. (source: U.S. Department of Transportation)

WHO:

Forty-eight truck safety advocates from 26 states and DC signed onto the letter to Members of Congress calling for passage of the legislation. The following family spokespersons are available for media interviews:

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.

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. It is a must-read and a major contribution to the field of dealing with grief after tragedy and loss.

Dawn King (Michigan)

President, Truck Safety Coalition

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

Gage Evans (Colorado)

Gage's husband, Bill Bailey, was killed in 2019 when a truck driver hauling a load of lumber was descending from the mountains on an interstate at a very high speed and crashed into the rear of slowing traffic in Lakewood, Colorado, killing 4 people and injuring many others. The motor carrier's limits of liability coverage (of either \$750k or \$1 million) was paid out to other claimants, including payments to other motor carriers for their property damage, before Gage even had time to hire a lawyer.

Eileen Kosc (Delaware)

Eileen was driving home from the beach in slow traffic in 2013 when she was struck from behind by an inattentive box truck driver, killing her 7-year-old son, Bryan, and injuring her and her other son, Brandon. It was a multi-vehicle crash resulting in not enough insurance money to cover all the cases. Eileen is an essential, front-line nursing manager who delivers health care and personally understands the excessive cost burdens involved with crashes involving large trucks. She stays involved with the Truck Safety Coalition's work in honor of her son, Bryan.

[LETTER TO CONGRESS FROM TRUCK SAFETY COALITION FAMILIES](#)

See below



April 15, 2021

Dear Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee:

As individuals who have survived truck crashes or have had family members killed or seriously injured, we are writing in strong support of legislation introduced by Representatives Jesus “Chuy” Garcia (D-IL), John Garamendi (D-CA), Mondaire Jones (D-NY), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Hank Johnson (D-GA), Jared Huffman (D-CA), Steve Cohen (D-TN), Adriano Espaillat (D-NY), and Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), directing the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to increase minimum insurance requirements for motor carriers.

This issue is about grieving families and not enriching lawyers. It is unfair, unreasonable, and unacceptable to burden innocent victims and survivors of truck crashes, as well as taxpayers, with the crushing costs of lifelong medical care as well as financial responsibility for children, spouses and other dependents left behind, because of irrefutably inadequate insurance coverage. Many of the individuals who have signed this letter know firsthand the devastating economic consequences of being involved in a truck crash with a motor carrier that only meets the minimum insurance requirement. It is not uncommon for family members to be forced to spend their life savings, raid their retirement accounts, borrow money, file for bankruptcy, or rely on government assistance.

In 1980, Congress passed legislation establishing \$750,000 as the minimum insurance requirement for motor carriers to ensure public safety and to measure the financial fitness and responsibility of a motor carrier company entering the business. The current minimum amount no longer fulfills these goals. Crash victims are routinely uncompensated, and many unfit and unsafe motor carriers are operating on our streets and roads. Furthermore, the minimum insurance requirement was never intended to cover so-called fender benders but rather those severe crashes causing multiple casualties, grave injuries, and serious property damage.

During these past 40 years, the cost of living in the United States has risen by more than 200 percent. In 1980, the per capita health expenditure in our country was about \$1,000 and in 2020 was approximately \$12,000. Furthermore, consider that in 1980 the annual salary of a Member of Congress was \$60,662. Today, it is \$174,000.

In 2012, Congress passed legislation, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21; P.L.112-141) directing the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to study the adequacy of the \$750,000 minimum insurance requirements for motor carriers of property. The report, issued in April 2014, states “In conclusion, FMCSA has determined that the current financial responsibility minimums are inadequate to fully cover the costs of some crashes in light of increased medical costs and revised value of statistical life estimates.”

Shortly after releasing the report, the FMCSA issued an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) to increase the minimum levels of financial responsibility for motor carriers. Unfortunately, the rulemaking was withdrawn in 2017. Nearly 10 years after Congress directed the study and seven years after FMCSA determined the \$750,000 minimum insurance requirement was inadequate, there still has been no agency action to address this significant inequity. Meanwhile, the truck crash death and injury toll on our roads and highways continues to grow at an alarming rate. According to DOT, in 2019, more than 5,000 people were killed in crashes involving large trucks and 159,000 were injured at a cost estimated to be \$143 billion. Since 2009 there has been a 48 percent increase in truck crash fatalities.

Families who experience the tragic loss or serious injury of a loved one in a truck crash carry a lifelong emotional burden. They should not have to shoulder a lifelong financial burden. We urge you to support this legislation directing an increase in the minimum insurance requirement for interstate motor carriers with periodic adjustments for inflation.

Sincerely,

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.

Gage Evans (*Colorado*)

In **2019**, Gage’s husband, Bill Bailey, was killed when a truck driver hauling a load of lumber was descending from the mountains on an interstate at a very high speed and crashed into the rear of slowing traffic in Lakewood, Colorado, killing 4 people and injuring many others. The motor carrier’s limits of liability coverage (of either \$750k or \$1 million) was paid out to other claimants (including payments to other motor carriers for their property damage) before Gage even had time to hire a lawyer.

Kate Brown (*Illinois*)

In **2005**, Kate’s 27-year-old son, Graham, was critically injured, partially disabled, and has endured more than 22 surgeries after he was hit by a drunk, drugged and fatigued semi driver who fell asleep at the wheel. There was not enough insurance coverage for his considerable medical bills. His health costs exceeded \$4-5 million.

Julie Magnan Patrissi (*Vermont*)

Julie was severely injured and her husband, David, was killed in a crash in **2002** when a semi crossed the median and collided with their car. Julie has had numerous surgeries over the past 19 years. She received nothing for her injuries because the truck owner had only minimum insurance.

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.

Michelle Novak (*New York*)

Michelle's nephew, Chuck, was one of five people who died in a NC interstate crash in **2010**, when a speeding semi crashed into a line of stopped cars. Ten others were injured. The minimum insurance was disbursed among all parties for injuries, fatalities, auto damage, county road and bridge repairs, first responders, and others. It would not have covered a month's worth of care for just one of the permanently injured victims.

Eileen Kosc (*Delaware*)

Eileen was driving home from the beach in slow traffic in **2013** when she was struck from behind by an inattentive box truck driver, killing her 7-year-old son, Bryan, and injuring her and her other son, Brandon. It was a multi-vehicle crash resulting in not enough insurance money to cover all the cases.

Santiago Calderon (*California*)

Santiago survived a crash in **2014** where 10 people died, and many others were injured when a double tractor-trailer crashed into the charter bus on which he was a passenger. Both the truck and the bus were engulfed in flames that started after impact. In his own words: "It makes complete sense to raise the insufficient insurance requirements, to help protect victims and survivors with injuries in future crashes."

Brady and Kaitlin Lambert (*Texas*)

In **2019**, Brady Lambert was riding his farm tractor on the shoulder of a highway, with his flashers activated, when he was struck from behind by a tractor-trailer. He was ejected, then airlifted to a hospital for treatment of the serious injuries suffered in the crash. The total costs of Brady's injuries exceeded \$750,000.

Daniel and Jessie Dorman (*Iowa*)

In **2020**, Daniel, their 5-year-old son, Harvey, and Jessie's parents, Teri and Rick, were rear-ended by a semi in western Kansas. Daniel had a concussion; Harvey was severely bruised, had a concussion and a cracked rib, was hospitalized for several days; Teri was flown to Wichita for emergency surgeries, and was hospitalized for a month before she was able to be transported back home. Teri's medical expenses alone have exceeded the insurance limits.

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.

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.

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.

Franklin Wood (*Virginia*)

Franklin's daughter, Dana, and her friend were killed in **2002** when a truck driver, driving on a suspended license, struck Dana's car, pushing it 1500 feet down the highway.

Ron Wood (*Washington, DC*)

Ron's mother, Betsy Wood, sister, Lisa Wood Martin, and Lisa's three children, Chance, Brock and Reid Martin, were killed in **2004** when a tractor trailer driver fell asleep at the wheel and crossed the median, striking their vehicle.

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.

Debra Cruz (*Texas*)

Debra survived being hit from behind by a semi in **2008**, though she lives with life-changing injuries that require her to wear a nerve stimulator to cope with overwhelming pain.

Vickie Johnson (*Georgia*)

Vickie's husband, Curt, and stepdaughter, Crystal, were killed in **2009** when they were stopped in traffic and hit from behind. Vickie and her daughter, Abby, and stepson, Cody, survived with injuries.

Scott T. Harper (*Massachusetts*)

Scott's mother was killed in **2011** with her 3 close senior living center friends, when a semi - driver ran a red light and t-boned the elders' car, killing all 4. Scott's mother lived for 6 hours, but none of her 3 children arrived in time to be at her side before she died.

Pierenna Arrington (*South Carolina*)

Pierenna's husband, Scott, was killed in **2012** while riding his motorcycle to work when he was hit and killed by a semi-truck pulling into traffic.

Craig Polston (*Ohio*)

In **2012**, Craig's wife, Anna, was killed, and he and his in-laws were injured when a truck driver illegally changed lanes and forced their car off the interstate in Georgia. There were two trucks involved, with evidence of violations of hours of service and cell phone use by one of the drivers.

Livia Maddamma (*Ohio*)

In **2015**, Livia's sister, Sandra Maddamma, was slowed down in interstate traffic when her car was struck from behind by a tractor-trailer. She was pushed into the center lane where her car struck another car, and Sandra died from her injuries.

Rick Watts (*Virginia*)

In **2015**, Rick's wife, Tiffany, his stepdaughters, Kelsie and Savannah, and Sandra Anderson, Tiffany's mother, were stopped near Chattanooga, TN, in traffic due to construction, when a tractor trailer collided with 8 vehicles. Six people, including Rick's entire family, were killed, and another 6 people were injured. The NTSB investigated this horrific crash.

Kristi Garrigues and Garrigues Family (*Washington*)

Kelsie and Savannah, from the **2015** Watts crash above, were Kristi Garrigues' granddaughters. She lost both of them that terrible day.

Martha Yancoskie-Mellinger (*Pennsylvania*)

In **2015**, Martha's Mom and Dad were involved in a side underride crash with a tractor-trailer stopped across both lanes of the road. Her Mom survived the crash; her Dad was pronounced dead at the scene.

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.

Becky McCammon-Matthew (*Florida*)

Becky's 20-year-old son, Dyllon, was killed in **2017** when a semi pulled out in front of his car.

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.

Sarah Jo Plucker-Wright (*Ohio*)

Sarah Jo was severely injured in **2018** when a semi driver ran a red light and struck her vehicle. Sarah Jo's leg has a titanium rod, she has permanent nerve damage, burn scars across her neck, and internal scarring in her abdomen.

Dorine E. and Thomas S. Norko (*Connecticut*)

In **2018**, in Idaho, Dorine's son, Senior Airman Lawrence P. Manlapit III, was killed along with two of his fellow airmen, Carlos Johnson and Karlie Westall, when the Jeep they were riding in was stopped in traffic in a construction zone and rear-ended by a tractor-trailer. The Jeep and truck were engulfed in flames. The semi driver, who had a poor record, was going 62 mph before impact, and was also killed.

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.

Anna Guardipee (*Virginia*)

Anna and her dear friend, Jennifer Burton, were slowed in construction traffic in **2019** when a semi failed to stop and rear ended their vehicle, pushing them into another semi. Anna was paralyzed and Jennifer was killed.

Paul Huffman (*Virginia*)

Paul, a close friend of Anna Guardipee (see above), has dedicated himself to supporting Anna since her crash in **2019**.

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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