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Statement of Joan Claybrook, Chair of CRASH, and former NHTSA Administrator, on the Need for Stronger Trucks Safety Rules

Washington, DC – Truck crash fatalities have increased a harrowing 66% since 2009, costing the victims and taxpayers an estimated 180 billion dollars, horrific injuries, and too many deaths. This large truck fatality crisis is an unattended and long ignored public health crisis. It is way past the time for DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Members of Congress to require remedial action. The solutions are not a mystery.

The Department of Transportation has the full authority to require proven low-cost technology like Automatic Emergency Braking and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems for all Commercial Motor Vehicles that over time will save thousands of lives and injuries. These systems slow down or stop a vehicle about to have a crash.

Because the damage imposed on passenger vehicles in car/truck crashes is often fatal or causes severe injuries to car occupants, preventing the truck from smashing into the passenger vehicle is the first line of defense. These systems already exist on some trucks. It is not rocket science. Such a performance standard has been considered at DOT for 6 years. We should not have to wait any longer for DOT to issue a rule requiring their installation on all trucks – large trucks and delivery trucks which roam through our neighborhoods every day.

In addition, strong rear and side underride guards can prevent smaller passenger vehicles from traveling underneath, a large truck and decapitating or violently injuring car occupants. A recent NHTSA/DOT rule allows old and insufficient technology to be used to meet the new rear underride standard to the great disappointment of crash survivors. It should be updated immediately. Many companies are already installing newer technology that was fully tested by the

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and is highly rated. But DOT ignored this lifesaving research, testing, and analysis.

Also, DOT's foolish and lethal "teen trucking pilot program" should be terminated immediately. DOT should not take any steps to encourage teens to drive large rigs.

In looking at the new numbers ranking States by truck crash fatalities per 100,000 population, it is striking that the highest truck crash fatalities per population are occurring in rural states. Other than Senator Wicker from Mississippi, the senators in these 12 states are often sponsors of truck safety rollbacks that will not reduce these deaths and injuries.

Montana and Nebraska, for example, have championed a pilot program allowing teens to drive trucks across the country. What are they thinking when they know that teen drivers have a far higher crash rate than older drivers? They should listen to truck crash victims, not their friends in the trucking industry.

Conversely, Senator Roger Wicker (R., Miss) continues to fiercely oppose industry pressure to allow bigger and heavier trucks, like Twin 33s, on our highways because they would only amplify and exacerbate this large truck highway safety crisis. Truck crash deaths and injuries are not a political issue. They are a public health issue that can be remedied with sensible safeguards issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

We are here today to urge Secretary Pete Buttigieg to act swiftly with members of Congress to stop degrading safety with special interest attacks on rules to mandate new safety rules to protect the public from this cruel and bloody disaster.

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The Truck Safety Coalition (TSC) is a partnership between Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH), also known as The CRASH Foundation, and Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.). The Truck Safety Coalition is dedicated to reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by truck-related crashes, providing compassionate support to truck crash survivors and families of truck crash victims, and educating the public, policymakers, and the media about truck safety issues. Visit our website at <https://trucksafety.org>

