



January 30, 2025

The Honorable Ted Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Cruz and Ranking Member Cantwell:

Truck crash deaths have surged by nearly 75 percent over the last thirteen years.¹ In 2022, NHTSA estimates roughly 6,000 people lost their lives in crashes involving large trucks, with another 160,000 sustaining injuries.² According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, in fatal two-vehicle crashes involving a large truck and a car, 96 percent of the deaths are the occupants of the passenger vehicle.³ A truck crash fatality crisis is occurring on our highways.

In light of this disturbing trend, the Truck Safety Coalition is appalled to find that the Licensing Individual Commercial Exam-takers Now Safely and Efficiently (LICENSE) Act is scheduled for Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Mark-up on February 5. There is nothing “safe” about the bill as written and it further erodes what little assurances remain in the Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) training, testing, and examination requirements.

The LICENSE Act undermines invaluable safety benefits provided by CDL holders who provide in-cab supervision to CLP (Commercial Learner’s Permit) as required by current statute and allows such “supervision” to occur from the cozy confines of the sleeper berth, brazenly allowing CLP supervisors to literally sleep on the job.

TSC reminds policymakers that the recently implemented Entry Level Driver Training (ELDT) requirements require **ZERO HOURS** of Behind the Wheel (BTW) Training to obtain a CDL. This occurred due to due lobbying efforts of the corporate trucking lobby in direct opposition to an overwhelming majority of the Entry Level Driver Training Advisory Committee recommending that a 30-hour BTW training requirement was necessary in the interests of public safety. The calendar has flipped forward, but corporate trucking lobbyists remain fixated on ensuring that new truck drivers are not subject to any supervised hours of BTW training.

¹ Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2022, NHTSA, Apr. 2024, DOT HS 813 560.

² Id.

³ <https://www.iihs.org/topics/fatality-statistics/detail/large-trucks#comparison-of-large-truck-and-passenger-vehicle-crashes>

This position is both absurd and indefensible. Common sense concludes that practice with an expert driving an unwieldy 80,000 lb. truck will make a driver safer and more skilled. Research supports this conclusion as well. A report from the highly reputable National Surface Transportation Safety Center for Excellence (NSTSCE) that is posted on FMCSA's [website](#), concluded the following (emphasis added):

*Generally speaking, **the first year of driving a CMV is riskier** in terms of crash rates, crash involvement, and moving violations...Thus, motor carriers may want to focus on driver training, including **engaging older, experienced drivers in driver mentoring programs to share their knowledge with inexperienced CMV drivers.***⁴

The LICENSE Act contains another element that reduces safety assurances in the CDL testing, issuing, and examination space. It allows prospective drivers to engage in a practice known as "forum shopping" where they can opt to have their testing administered in states where it is open secret that some examiners are more forgiving than others. To be clear, this can go beyond permissive test administrators. CDL exam and license issuance fraud is one of the most [frequent DOT OIG investigations](#) annually. This issue quietly pops up all over the country in states including, but not limited to: Mississippi, California, Ohio, Texas, Idaho and Massachusetts. CDL fraud and forum shopping is a legitimate truck safety issue occurring across the country. **The LICENSE Act makes forum shopping easier than ever by allowing prospective CDL holders to take their tests in states of their choice, rather than the state of their domicile.**

Safety has a cost. All carriers should be willing and prepared to meet the cost that safety requires, such as supervising new, inexperienced drivers before they receive their CDL. This bill rewards an industry that annually loses **90% of their drivers year over year** by making it easier than ever to put inexperienced and unsupervised new drivers in big rigs.⁵ An industry that claims to pride itself on the safe and efficient movement of goods should be willing to invest in acquiring and retaining safe drivers. The LICENSE Act rewards large trucking for failing to address this longstanding problem by making it easier than ever to put less safe, inexperienced drivers in trucks on a road near you and your loved ones. Truck Safety Coalition community members have experienced the agonizing loss of life from preventable large truck crashes on our roads and plead with Congress to do more to protect roadway users, not less. **The LICENSE Act must be vigorously opposed.**

Sincerely,



Zach Cahalan
Executive Director, Truck Safety Coalition (TSC)

⁴ Dunn, Naomi, Susan Soccolich, and Jeffrey Hickman. "Commercial Motor Vehicle Driver Risk Based on Age and Driving Experience." (2020).

⁵ <https://www.freightwaves.com/news/ata-truckload-driver-turnover-remains-high-in-q4>
700 Pennsylvania Ave, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20003

Tami Friedrich Trakh

President

Truck Safety Coalition & Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways Board Member

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.

Russell Swift

Co-Chair

Parents Against Tired Truckers & Truck Safety Coalition Board Member

Russ' son, Jasen, was killed instantly, as was a fellow Marine, while they drove in the dark to work in 1993, by a seventeen-year-old truck driver on an invalid learner's 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, causing a fatal underride crash.

Daphne & Steve Izer

Co-Chair

Parents Against Tired Truckers

Daphne and Steve's son, Jeff, and three of his friends were killed in 1993 when a semi-truck driver fell asleep at the wheel and ran over their parked car.

Jennifer M. Tierney

Chair

Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

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

Dawn King

Vice-President

Truck Safety Coalition & Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways Board Member

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

Pam Biddle

Board Member

Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

On May 13, 2017, Pam's 23-year-old son, Aaron Lee, was in the car with his father, Brian, and Brian's partner, Stephanie Swaim. They were stopped in traffic due to a car carrier that had a brake fire and was still partially in their lane of traffic. A semi-driver failed to slow down and rear-ended the Lee's car which was pushed into and under another semi in front of them resulting in a rear underride crash. The vehicles then burst into flames killing Aaron, Brian, and Stephanie.

Anna Guardipee

Board Member

Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

In 2019, Anna Guardipee and her best friend, Jenny Burton, in stopped on I-77 when a distracted semi-truck driver slammed into the back of their car, pushing them into the semi they were stopped behind.

Jenny and Anna were air-lifted to the hospital. Anna survived with severe life-altering injuries, Jenny did not survive.

Jena Frost

Board Member

Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.)

Jena's son, Wyatt, was 5 years old when he was killed by a box truck that was not equipped with AEB.

Lee Jackson

Board Member

Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH)

Truck crash survivor and honorably retired CMV enforcement unit officer with Ft. Worth Police Department

Jeffrey Burns

Board Member, Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH) & Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.)

Paul Huffman, Board Member, Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.) & Truck Safety Coalition

Kevin Donovan, Board Member, Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.) & Truck Safety Coalition

Joseph Hanslip, Board Member, Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.) & Truck Safety Coalition