



March 27, 2023

The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Chairwoman
The Honorable Robert C. Scott, Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx and Ranking Member Scott:

In advance of tomorrow's hearing, "Unleashing America's Opportunities for Hiring and Employment," the Truck Safety Coalition (TSC), Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH), and Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.) implore policymakers to keep safety their highest priority.

America is in the midst of a truck crash crisis. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) projects truck crash fatalities to increase another 10% in 2022, which would result in over 6,000 innocent highway users being killed.¹ If this trend holds, it will represent an 83 percent increase in truck crash fatalities since 2009.² In addition, another 147,000 are unacceptably 147,000 injured.³ The "crash tax" cost to society and taxpayers is immense, estimated at over 140 billion dollars annually.⁴

Contrary to industry claims otherwise, teens and trucks are a lethal combination. Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) drivers ages 19-20 are six times more likely to be involved in fatal crashes than those aged 21 or older.⁵ The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) consistently lists truck driving as one of America's deadliest professions every year, with 800-900 truck driver fatalities annually.⁶ Recruiting the worst driving demographic into one of the deadliest occupations is absolutely terrifying. Even NHTSA concludes, "One thing is certain: teens aren't ready to have the same level of driving responsibility as adults."⁷ Judging from the comments FMCSA received when soliciting comments for the "Safe Driver Apprentice Program", the

¹ Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats; Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities and Fatality Rate by Sub-Categories in 2021, NHTSA, May 2022, DOT HS 813 298

² Traffic Safety Facts, 2020 Data: Large Trucks, NHTSA, Apr. 2022, DOT HS 813 286.

³ Id.

⁴ 2022 Pocket Guide to Large Truck and Bus Statistics, FMCSA, Dec. 2022, RRA-22-007.

⁵ Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Comments to the docket, FMCSA-2000-8410-0515; citing Christie, R. and Fabre, J. 1999. Potential for fast-tracking heavy vehicle drivers. Melbourne, Australia: National Road Transport Commission.

⁶ USDOT releases new data showing that road fatalities spiked in first half of 2021. U.S. Department of Transportation. (2022, October 28). Retrieved January 7, 2022, from <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/usdot-releases-new-data-showing-road-fatalities-spiked-first-half-2021>

⁷ NHTSA. (n.d.). Teen Driving. Retrieved June 3, 2022, from <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving>

public feels the same way. 73 percent of individual public comments (i.e. those not filed by trade groups, companies, or organizations) were opposed to the program.⁸

The ability to move goods safely and efficiently in our nation is a critical one. Existing federal and state government policy reflects this concern and extends several subsidies to the trucking industry by not requiring the sector to bear the full brunt of its associated costs. A 2015 Congressional Budget Office analysis found that “Although freight transport contributes significantly to the productivity of the U.S. economy, it also involves sizable costs to society. Those costs include wear and tear on roads and bridges; delays caused by traffic congestion; injuries, fatalities, and property damage from accidents; and harmful effects from exhaust emissions. No one pays those external costs directly—neither freight haulers, nor shippers, nor consumers.”⁹

Despite the assistance industry already receives from state and local governments, it brazenly claims it needs access to teen truckers to address a long-standing driver shortage. This is absurd. Large corporate motor carriers, those with over \$30M in revenue, can do much more to hold up their end of the bargain. These carriers self-report a staggeringly high 92% turnover rate.¹⁰ This has a highly detrimental effect on safety. A 2020 study indicated that a truck driver’s first year operating a CMV is the riskiest and is associated with elevated crash rates.¹¹ It is advised that large carriers spend far more time investing in improving their driver retention rates instead of begging Congress to increase their recruiting pool by allowing more teens to drive trucks.

Research indicates that when truck labor rates are fair, there is less incidence of driver fatigue, fewer regulatory violations, and a reduction in crash rates.¹² One simple and humane solution is to abolish the pay-by-mile truck driver structure and eliminate the unjust and unsafe Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Motor Carrier Overtime Exemption that prohibits truck drivers from qualifying for overtime pay. Paying drivers by the mile does not honor their actual working time. Truck drivers deserve to be fairly compensated for all encumbered time, such as traffic, weather, loading/unloading, and more. Not paying drivers for all their time leads to perverse incentives for drivers to drive as far and fast as possible. The U.S. Department of Transportation also supports eliminating the FLSA Motor Carrier Overtime Exemption, as cited in its 2022 Supply Chain Assessment.¹³ The 117th Congress felt similarly and introduced the “Guaranteeing Overtime for Truckers Act” to achieve this end.¹⁴

⁸ <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/FMCSA-2022-0002>

⁹ Nelson, J., Phillips, K. “The Economic Effects of Financing a Large and Permanent Increase in Government Spending: Working Paper 2021-03”, Congressional Budget Office Working Papers (2015)

¹⁰ “ATA Report Shows OTR Driver Turnover Rate ‘Held Steady’ in Q4 of 2020”, American Trucking Associations, 31 Mar. 2021, <https://www.thetrucker.com/trucking-news/business/ata-report-shows-otr-driver-turnover-rate-held-steady-in-q4-of-2020>

¹¹ Dunn, Naomi, Susan Soccolich, and Jeffrey Hickman. “Commercial Motor Vehicle Driver Risk Based on Age and Driving Experience.” (2020).

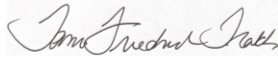
¹² Ju, Shengyang and Belzer, Michael H., Pay Incentives, Working Time, and Safety: Evidence from U.S. Intrastate Trucking Companies. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4046436>

¹³ United States. US Department of Transportation. Supply Chain Assessment of the Transportation Industrial Base: Freight and Logistics: Executive Summary. US Department of Transportation, 2022

¹⁴ HR 7517, Guaranteeing Overtime for Truckers Act, 2022. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/7517/text>
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Truck drivers and the motoring public deserve better than teen truckers. An estimated 6,000 people will have likely lost their lives in truck crashes this past year.¹⁵ Commonsense solutions exist to support truck driver retention, enhance public safety, and provide truck drivers with decent working conditions. Teen trucking is not a solution, but a safety nightmare for all.

Sincerely,



Tami Friedrich Trakh
President
Truck Safety Coalition

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.



Zach Cahalan
Executive Director, Truck Safety Coalition (TSC)

cc: House Committee on Education and Labor Members

¹⁵ Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats; Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities and Fatality Rate by Sub-Categories in 2021, NHTSA, May 2022, DOT HS 813 298