

**Opening Statement of Chair Gus Bilirakis
As Prepared for Delivery
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Innovation, Data, and Commerce
Hearing entitled “Self-Driving Vehicle Legislative Framework: Enhancing
Safety, Improving Lives and Mobility, and Beating China”
July 26, 2023**

Good morning everyone and welcome to today’s legislative hearing on self-driving vehicles, also known as autonomous vehicles, or AVs.

The work we do in this subcommittee is foundational to American’s economic future and national security.

It is essential we secure our country’s leadership in emerging technologies to transform Americans lives.

When this subcommittee began working on AVs under Republican leadership, over 6 years ago, I don’t believe anyone thought we would be back to square one today in 2023, re-examining similar legislation that had previously passed the House unanimously, and that many members of this Committee on both sides cosponsored.

It is sad and unfortunate that we haven’t been able to do anything in this space given all we can benefit from this technology, and we know our adversaries aren’t waiting.

This hearing serves as an opportunity to level set and discuss why it’s dire for us to move legislation forward and not give in to ancillary demands from those who wish to keep the U.S. in the 20th century.

By NHTSA’s 2022 estimates, 42,795 Americans lost their lives in crashes, and for the first 3 months of this year approximately 9,330 lives were lost. This technology can help roll back these sad fatality statistics, solving the issues of human limitation, impairments, and inattentiveness. It’s clear the status quo is unacceptable.

We are also in a race against the clock with China.

While the United States has failed to advance a national framework that expands testing and deployment, China has unveiled a national strategy to boost testing and deployment throughout their country. Any more inaction from Congress will result in the Chinese defining and owning the technology and its supply chain.

Enacting a national regulatory framework without top-down taxpayer subsidies is the true path to securing the future of our AV economy.

I was pleased that the first hearing of this year focused our competitiveness with China, which Jeff Farrah from the newly formed Autonomous Vehicle Industry Association (AVIA) testified on the need to get this done THIS year.

As he laid the case out clearly, America must not lose our edge and cede this life-saving and transformational technology to those who don't hold our values.

It's also important to think about who this technology will benefit. Many of us take for granted our ability to drive a car, either to our jobs, to visit friends or family, or run errands. But millions of Americans don't have that luxury.

In fact, today marks the 33rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Just as that law made sure to protect people living with disabilities from discrimination, we can draw parallels to the bills we're discussing today.

I want to thank Mr. Latta for including language I championed in his discussion draft to ensure people living with disabilities cannot be discriminated against from receiving a license to access this technology... and for ensuring that manufactures keep in mind how to design their vehicles so that all people can use them regardless of their disability.

Studies have shown how impactful AVs will be for transportation and mobility, especially for people living with disabilities, and we should certainly not be dictating who can and cannot access them.

Mr. Riccobono, thank you for testifying today and sharing how much this will transform the lives of people living with disabilities.

AVs hold so much promise for everyone in this country, so let's make sure this promise ends up a reality for everyone, and not just a proportion of the U.S. population.

I want to thank Mr. Latta for his tireless work to make America the home of manufacturing the vehicles of the future, and for Mr. Walberg's efforts to ensure that Chinese auto companies don't take advantage of our openness just as their Tech companies have.

Thank you to the panel for your testimony, and I yield back.