

Vice Chairman Russ Fulcher
Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Commerce,
Manufacturing, and Trade
“Looking Under the Hood: The State of NHTSA and Motor
Vehicle Safety”
June 26, 2025
As prepared for delivery

Good morning and thank you to our witnesses for joining today’s educational hearing on motor vehicle safety and the state of the automotive industry. I look forward to a robust and informative discussion that will help Congress, and specifically, this subcommittee, gain a clearer understanding of motor vehicle safety issues and its regulator, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration or NHTSA.

Automobile safety has been a long-standing topic of this subcommittee, and we play a crucial role in ensuring that the vehicles on our roadways are safe for families, workers, and the traveling public. Automobiles are deeply woven into the fabric of American life. From commuting to work, to picking up kids at school, to taking a cross-country road trip, automobiles are both a cultural icon and a pillar of the American dream.

That’s why today’s hearing marks the beginning of a bipartisan, member-driven, and stakeholder-informed process to develop a motor vehicle safety title as part of Congress’s broader efforts to reauthorize our surface transportation programs.

As part of this, the subcommittee is spearheading a bipartisan process to solicit stakeholder input to inform a motor vehicle safety title. Further, myself and Chairman Bilirakis, will seek priorities from our committee members to ensure our product reflects the priorities of our diverse membership.

Our primary objective will be to find solutions to address the tragic reality that nearly 40,000 Americans die annually from motor vehicle crashes, a staggering and tragic statistic. These crashes also lead to hundreds of billions in economic losses and cost taxpayers' tens of billions of dollars. NHTSA plays a central role in addressing this pressing issue through its education campaigns, regulatory work, and enforcement efforts. Congress must ensure that the agency is equipped needed to fulfill its mission and save lives.

Second, we must continue to recognize the economic importance of the automotive sector. This industry is America's largest manufacturing base, supporting tens of millions of jobs across the country and serving as a major driver of exports. As global competitors—especially China—seek to dominate the future of automotive innovation, Congress must examine how our regulatory structure can foster, rather than hinder, American leadership. This includes looking at ways to modernize and streamline regulations while maintaining our strong safety standards.

Third, we must embrace the future of mobility. The emergence of automated vehicle technology presents a generational opportunity to prevent crashes, restore independence to millions of elderly and disabled Americans, and

bolster economic growth. Congress must use this opportunity to advance a robust regulatory framework for autonomous vehicle technology.

To achieve these goals, I look forward to working in a bipartisan manner with Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky, Chairman Guthrie, and Ranking Member Pallone. Together, we can craft smart, balanced policy solutions that save lives, strengthen American competitiveness, and shape the future of transportation for the better.

Thank you again to our witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony.