

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader
Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Hearing on “Summer Driving Dangers: Exploring Ways to Protect Drivers
and their Families”
May 23, 2019
*As Prepared for Delivery***

Good morning and welcome to the Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee hearing. Today we will explore ways we can protect drivers and their families from dangers on our roadways.

First, thank you Mr. Harrison for being here. Your story is powerful and moving. I want to commend you for your commitment to Chase.

Several automakers have taken the challenge of reducing instances children left in cars head on and there are also several startups focusing on other technologies to address these tragedies.

I remain committed to finding all paths to getting safety technologies into cars faster – sometimes that means industry needs certainty and sometimes that means the market needs space for innovation or both.

This weekend is Memorial Day Weekend. It brings families and friends together to remember and honor those who have sacrificed their lives defending our rights and Freedom.

It also unofficially marks the start of the summer vacation travel season. With more travel comes more risks on our roads.

In recent years, more than 300 people have died over this holiday weekend and some estimate that number could increase over this weekend. I would encourage everyone here and watching, please be safe.

- Please put your phone down and focus on driving;
- Please do not drive if you have consumed any alcohol or other drugs: “If you feel different, you drive different”; and

- Please put your seat belt on...seat belts save lives.

Risks on our roadways also present safety concerns year-round. Technology offers potential solutions to many of these safety concerns.

Right now, advanced driver assistance systems are in more and more of the cars we drive every day.

Advanced driver assistance systems include automatic emergency braking, lane departure warning, crash avoidance technology, blind spot detection, vehicle-to-vehicle communications, V2X, and so much more.

In fact, 20 automakers have voluntarily pledged to include automatic emergency braking (AEB) in virtually all new passenger vehicles by September 2022.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) estimates that by 2025, this agreement will prevent 28-thousand crashes and 12-thousand injuries.

These systems are the foundation and building blocks for self-driving vehicles.

We lose more than 37,000 lives a year on our roads, and according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 94 percent of all accidents are due to human error.

These include distracted driving, driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and even driving drowsy. The more we can safely automate the driving process, the more human error we can remove. As a result, we can greatly improve the safety of our roadways.

In addition to drastically improving safety, self-driving vehicles offer vast mobility benefits. People with disabilities, our elderly community, and those not served by traditional public transportation stand to gain so much from widespread use of self-driving vehicles.

Self-driving vehicles promise to improve freedom and mobility for our communities. Self-driving vehicles could make going to work, to the grocery store, across town to visit friends, or to go to the doctor so much easier.

Self-driving vehicles will restore independence and break down transportation barriers for so many Americans.

Self-driving vehicles also are important for our global standing. Right now, the U.S. is the global leader in innovation. To compete and remain the leader, we must do everything we can to advance the safe development and deployment of self-driving vehicle technology.

Other countries are moving full speed ahead. Some are even developing their technology in our own backyard. Almost a quarter of all companies testing in California are Chinese.

Earlier this year, I joined my colleagues Republican Leader Walden, and Rep. Latta urging this Committee to continue the bipartisan work from last Congress to advance the safe development of self-driving cars.

I want to thank Chair Schakowsky for holding this important hearing for us to explore ways in which we can improve auto safety.

Thank you and I yield back.