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COMPETITIVE ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE
Advancing Liberty from the Economy to Ecology

October 2, 2017

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation
716 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, and members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation:

The Competitive Enterprise Institute commends Chairman Thune and Senator Peters for their bipartisan efforts on modernizing the nation's automotive safety regulatory framework to allow for more rapid deployment of life-saving automated driving systems. CEI supports S. 1885, *American Vision for Safer Transportation Through Advancement of Revolutionary Technologies Act*, as an important first step for bringing these technologies and applications to market.

With highway fatalities now approaching 40,000 per year, it is more urgent than ever to allow for the deployment of technologies that address the primary cause of auto crashes: human error and misbehavior. Automated driving systems have the potential to reduce or eliminate the responsibility of human drivers, their unsafe decision-making, and the resulting harms.

Automated driving systems can also offer mobility-disadvantaged populations such as the disabled and elderly the prospect of personal travel options that are today either unaffordable or impractical for many.

We also urge the committee to integrate motor vehicles with gross vehicle weight ratings in excess of 10,000 pounds into the highly automated vehicle policy framework. The interests of truck drivers are important but not paramount. The efficiencies these technologies bring to transportation and logistics will result in lower costs to consumers who, particularly at the low end of the economic spectrum, need them badly.

Fears of imminent truck driver job losses are unfounded, as automated driving systems that completely eliminate the need for real-time human monitoring and direction remain years away, and narrow economic concerns based purely on speculation should not take priority over reducing the number of injuries and deaths on our nation's roads.

But even if the narrow private interests of professional drivers were to be weighed against the public interest in extending the highly automated vehicle policy framework across all vehicle classes, it is important to note that more than three times as many Americans are employed as on-the-job drivers compared to motor vehicle operators. Those employed in on-the-job-driving occupations stand to gain from increasing vehicle automation in terms of both productivity and workplace conditions,

according to a recent report from the Department of Commerce's Economics and Statistics Administration.[1]

CEI appreciates the work done to date by committee members and would be pleased to discuss these issues with you further.

Sincerely,

Marc Scribner
Senior Fellow
Competitive Enterprise Institute

[1] Beede, David, Regina Powers, and Cassandra Ingram. Office of the Chief Economist, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. (August 11, 2017). The Employment Impact of Autonomous Vehicles (ESA Issue Brief # 05-17). Retrieved from https://www.esa.gov/reports/employment-impact-autonomous-vehicles.