

July 17, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

We urge you to ensure that the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations bill provides the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) with the resources necessary to reduce the unacceptably high number of deaths and injuries caused by traffic crashes.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of preventable injuries and deaths in the United States.¹ The nation suffers approximately 44,000 deaths and 2.6 million injuries from traffic crashes each year, which cost society over \$800 billion in medical bills, emergency services, lost productivity, insurance costs, workplace loss, legal costs, and property damage.² Between 1990 and 2022, over 203 million traffic crashes claimed 1.3 million lives and caused 92.2 million injuries.³ Fatalities and injuries per vehicle mile traveled have remained persistently high since 2008.⁴

NHTSA is our nation's principal automobile safety regulator, charged with reducing deaths and injuries associated with traffic crashes. NHTSA carries out its lifesaving mission by establishing safety standards, conducting public awareness and education campaigns, investigating defects, and providing grants and technical assistance to state and local governments to support local highway safety programs.⁵

With NHTSA on the beat, traffic safety is a priority, not an afterthought. From 1968 through 2019, NHTSA's safety standards prevented over 860,000 deaths, 49 million injuries, and damage to 65 million vehicles, generating over \$17.3 trillion in societal benefits.⁶ In 2019 alone,

¹ National Safety Council. "Top 10 Preventable Injuries." injuryfacts.nsc.org/all-injuries/deaths-by-demographics/top-10-preventable-injuries/. Accessed 11 June 2026.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "About Transportation Safety." 19 November 2024. www.cdc.gov/transportation-safety/about/index.html; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Number of Injuries and Associated Costs." wisqars.cdc.gov/cost/?y=2023&o=TAR&i=1&m=3001&g=00&s=0&u=TOTAL&u=AVG&t=COMBO&t=MED&t=LIFE&t=WORK&a=5Yr&g1=0&g2=199&a1=0&a2=199&r1=MECH&r2=INTENT&r3=NONE&r4=NONE. Accessed 11 June 2026.

³ Bureau of Transportation Statistics. "Motor Vehicle Safety Data." www.bts.gov/content/motor-vehicle-safety-data. Accessed 11 June 2026.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Congressional Research Service. "Federal Traffic Safety Programs: In Brief." 11 January 2024. www.crs.gov/Reports/R43026?source=search#ifn45.

⁶ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "NHTSA: 50 Years of Vehicle Safety Standards Save Hundreds of Thousands of Lives, Prevented Millions of Injuries." 17 December 2024. www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/50-years-vehicle-safety-

standards prevented 40,000 deaths, 1.9 million injuries, and damage to 3.8 million vehicles.⁷ NHTSA has also successfully taken unsafe vehicles off our nation's roadways. Since 1968, NHTSA has participated in the recall of more than 390 million vehicles, 66 million pieces of motor vehicle equipment, 46 million tires, and 42 million car seats due to safety defects.⁸

NHTSA is on the cusp of ushering in new transformational safety technologies that may rival the lifesaving effects of seatbelts and airbags. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law mandates that NHTSA support the deployment of several sophisticated safety technologies, including drunk and impaired driving prevention technology, crash avoidance systems, and driver monitoring features.⁹ Many of these requirements are currently being implemented but are not yet finalized.

We urge the committee to reject significant cuts to NHTSA proposed in the FY 2026 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations bill. The legislation cuts NHTSA's operations and research account by over \$10 million, harming the agency's ability to conduct rulemaking, enforcement actions, and research and analysis.¹⁰ Further, the legislation slashes nearly \$78 million of supplemental funds allocated in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (P.L. 117-58), impeding important crash data collection and analysis, vehicle safety and behavioral research, and highway traffic safety programs.¹¹ We are particularly concerned that such funding cuts may lead to further firings or forced retirements, which have decimated NHTSA.

Traffic crashes do not have to be the price we pay for commuting to work, dropping the kids off at school, or picking up groceries. By providing NHTSA with sufficient resources to support revolutionary safety technologies, educate the motoring public, and improve the design, construction, and performance of motor vehicles, we can dramatically improve roadway safety.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

National Consumers League

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

standards#:~:text=From%201968%20through%202019%2C%20NHTSA's,damage%20to%203.8%20million%20vehicles.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "Motor Vehicle Safety Defects and Recalls." www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/documents/mvdefectsandrecalls_808795.pdf. Accessed 11 June 2025.

⁹ Pub. L. 117-58

¹⁰ Department of Transportation. "Fiscal Year 2026 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration." https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-05/NHTSA_FY_2026_Budget_Estimates_CJ.pdf. Accessed 14 July 2025.; H.R. _____. "Making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes." [docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP20/20250714/118503/BILLS-119--AP--TransHUD-FY26THUDAppropriationsBill.pdf](https://www.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP20/20250714/118503/BILLS-119--AP--TransHUD-FY26THUDAppropriationsBill.pdf). Accessed 14, July 2025.

¹¹ *Id.*

Center for Auto Safety

National Safety Council

Consumer Federation of America

Safe Kids Worldwide

Consumer Reports

Safety Research & Strategies

Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety

Stopdistrations.org

Families for Safe Streets

The Dawn Project

Impact Teen Drivers

Truck Safety Coalition

Kids and Car Safety

Vision Zero Network

League of American Bicyclists

Whirlwind Wheelchair International

National Coalition for Safer Roads