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Senate Concurrent Resolution 2 – Sponsor Testimony
Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee
Chair, Senator Rob McColley
Wednesday, February 12, 2020

Good morning Chairman McColley, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of myself and Senator O'Brien on Senate Concurrent Resolution 2, to urge Congress to require commercial trucks to use side guards.

The deadliest types of vehicle crashes are those involving large commercial trucks and pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. Over the past five years, more than 556 pedestrians and bicyclists in the United States were killed by side impacts with large commercial trucks. Side guards are safety barriers that run between truck tires along the side length of trucks and trailers to protect vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and bicyclists. Nearly half of bicyclists and more than one-quarter of pedestrians killed by a large truck first impact the side of a truck or trailer.

Currently, there are regulations for rear guards in the United States. These guards were developed to minimize damage and fatalities in collisions between trucks and automobiles, with standards established to address high speed collisions on highways. A friend of mine, Tom Diemert, contacted me regarding this issue because he was personally impacted when his daughter, Kimberli passed away after a side collision with a commercial truck. An investigation determined the cause of the accident was the semi-truck committing an improper lane change, then hitting Kimberli's car and dragging her for over 280 feet. Unfortunately, Kimberli passed away three days later in the hospital due to complications of her injuries from the accident. If there had been side guards installed on this truck, her injuries would have been lessened or prevented, and she likely would have survived the accident.

Safety is an important focus of SCR 2; however, it would also improve fuel economy of large trucks. Side guards offer the potential to reduce air drag and increase fuel economy, depending on the body of the commercial vehicles. Air drag increases with speed, so potential fuel savings would be greatest for vehicles that travel at highway speeds—in the range of 4-7% for aerodynamic side skirts mounted under trailers.

Cities such as New York and Boston have started to implement side guard technology on vehicles owned or contracted by the city. Following a national side guard mandate in the UK, there was a 61% drop in cyclist fatalities and a 20% drop in pedestrian fatalities in side guard collisions with trucks. Some trucking companies are already taking action here in Ohio. For example, Thomas Transport located Macedonia is installing AngelWing Truck Side Guards on their 18-wheelers.

Chairman McColley and members of the Committee, I appreciate your attention and consideration of this important issue. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.