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Sponsor Testimony
Senate Concurrent Resolution 16
Public Utilities
Chair, Senator Bill Beagle
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Good morning, Chairman Beagle, Vice-Chair LaRose, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Public Utilities Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Concurrent Resolution 16, to urge Congress to require commercial trucks to use side guards.

As you may know, 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 trucks¹. Side guards are safety barriers that run between truck tires that can be attached to large trucks 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 truck¹.

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 in a side collision with a commercial truck. After an investigation the cause of the accident was concluded to be the semi-truck committing an improper lane change, then hitting Kimberli's car and dragging her for about 280.4'. Unfortunately, Kimberli passed away three days later in the hospital due to complications of her injuries from the accident.

Safety is an important focus of SCR 16; however, it would also improve fuel economy for 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."² Side guards can add 1-3% fuel savings by a single-unit truck (see image below³).



Figure 12. Examples of aerodynamic side skirts that could also provide side underrun protection.

Cities such as New York and Boston have started to implement side guard technology on vehicles owned or contracted by the city. Since the city of London, in the United Kingdom has required the use of side guards they have seen a decrease in fatalities by 61% for bicyclists and 20% for pedestrians in side impact collisions. Some trucking companies are already taking action in Ohio for example, Thomas Transport, in Senator Frank LaRose's district is installing side guards on their 18-wheelers, called "Angel Wing".

Chairman Beagle 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.

1. <https://www.volpe.dot.gov/our-work/truck-side-guards-resource-page>
2. <http://epa.gov/smartway/forpartners/technology.htm>
3. <https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/view/dot/12164>