



SENATOR KENNY YUKO

Ohio's 25th Senate District
Senate Minority Leader

Sponsor Testimony
Senate Concurrent Resolution 12
Transportation Committee
Chair, Senator Stephanie Kunze
December 8, 2021

Good morning, Chair Kunze, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Transportation Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Concurrent Resolution 12, 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 a recent five year period, more than 556 pedestrians and bicyclists in the United States were killed by side impacts with large commercial trucks¹. Side guards, also known as rigid side skirts, are safety barriers that run between large truck trailer tires to protect vulnerable road users from being caught underneath. 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 nearly 300 feet. This truck did not have side guards, which could have prevented her car from being caught underneath. 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 12; however, it would also improve fuel economy for trucks. Side guards reduce air drag and decrease fuel costs. Air drag increases with speed, so potential fuel savings would be greatest for vehicles that travel at highway speeds. Side guards can add 4-7% fuel savings for a single-unit truck (see image below³). They are easy to install, low maintenance, and pay for themselves in as little as 50,000 miles driven.



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 Roegner's district, is installing side guards on their 18-wheelers. These side guards are saving Thomas Transport money, and protecting the lives of folks in our communities and on our roadways. I applaud their leadership on this issue, and hope we can all work together to bring this improvement to trucks all across Ohio, and the country.

Chair Kunze 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>