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COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE – SUBCOMMITTEE ON DIGITAL
COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
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Chairman Latta, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and members of the Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee, my name is Joseph Okpaku and I am the Vice President of Government Relations for Lyft. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this very important topic.

Lyft was the first company to establish peer-to-peer, on-demand ridesharing, and is currently the fastest growing rideshare company in the United States. Today, Lyft connects nearly 18 million people a month with efficient, affordable and safe rides in over 250 communities across the country.

Lyft was founded with the mission of improving lives by offering the world's best transportation, and in less than five years we have proven to be a powerful driver of positive change with respect to economic empowerment, enhancing the efficiency of public transportation, and connecting communities previously underserved by prior



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transportation options. The proof is in the data. Since our launch in 2012, Lyft has worked to reduce traffic and congestion, increase mobility options, prevent D.U.I.s, reduce assault related arrests, stimulate local economies, and provide economic opportunities to our drivers. And this is only the beginning.

Autonomous vehicles hold tremendous potential to not only further improve the quality of life for our users, but also to literally save their lives by decreasing the frequency and severity of motor vehicle accidents. Nearly 35,000 people perish in the United States each year in motor vehicle related accidents, which is the equivalent of nearly 700 deaths every single week. And nearly 90 percent of those accidents are blamed on human error, which include such issues as reckless driving, drunk or impaired driving, distracted driving, and fatigued driving. Autonomous vehicles offer the potential to dramatically reduce these type of accidents and save lives.

Lyft's commitment to testing and deploying AVs is rooted in the belief that the inherent safety benefits of autonomous vehicles should be affordable and available to all segments of the public, regardless of income, geography, or disability.

Furthermore, Lyft believes that the introduction of AVs via a ridesharing network will fundamentally transform cities and the way that people move around them. The



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convergence of ridesharing and AVs provides Lyft with the tools to create a perfectly efficient transportation network that will greatly reduce the need and demand for car ownership and significantly expand transportation options, particularly for segments of the population that currently have limited access to transportation options due to age, infirmity, or disability.

As ownership rates decline and consumers continue to engage with the Lyft platform, we will see fewer cars on the road, less congestion, and increased positive environmental impacts, such as reduced carbon emissions. A world with less cars provides a tremendous opportunity to reorient, reimagine, and redesign our urban fabric. Cities of the not too distant future could be built around people, instead of cars. They could and should be defined by communities and connections, not pavement and parking spots. They could and should include common spaces where culture can thrive—and where new ideas can be shared in the very places where cars previously stood, parked and empty.

Lyft stands at the center of this coming transportation revolution, as we believe that the transition to an autonomous future will not occur primarily through individually-owned cars. Rather, it will be both more practical and appealing to rely on autonomous vehicles



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when they are part of Lyft's networked fleet. To this end, Lyft has been working both on its own and with trusted partners, such as General Motors, to test and validate the safe performance and operation of AV technology, most recently in California and Arizona. It is our goal to operate a pilot in a major city this year that will permit consumers to enjoy, for the first time, a Lyft in an autonomous vehicle.

However, there are very serious challenges to be faced in bringing the full value of autonomous vehicles to market for mass consumption, and the greatest potential obstacle is constrictive legislation and regulations. The worst possible scenario for the growth of autonomous vehicles is an inconsistent and conflicting patchwork of State, local, municipal and county laws that will hamper efforts to bring AV technology to market.

This scenario is well on its way to becoming reality. Since the beginning of the new year, over 20 States have filed nearly 60 bills to regulate the testing and deployment of AVs. While most of the bills are well-intentioned, it is our position that States should not rush to regulate this technology.

It is our view that if a State does choose to take legislative or regulatory action with respect to AVs, such action should be premised on removing impediments in current



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law to the safe testing or deployment of such vehicles, and creating a pro-competitive and technology-neutral playing field.

In order to facilitate the continued innovation, testing, and development of AVs by all industry participants, I would urge Congress to examine two potential avenues for action. The first is revising NHTSA's exemption authority to allow for a greater number of autonomous vehicles to be allowed on the road for testing and deployment purposes. The second is directing NHTSA to begin a rulemaking to update current FMVSS standards to accommodate the development, deployment, and introduction into commerce of AVs at commercial scale.

Lyft looks forward to working with the members of this Committee to ensure that AVs can be tested and deployed safely and efficiently in communities all across this country. The tremendous potential that AVs offer to save thousands of lives, to increase access to transportation for so many, to reduce congestion and to reorient our communities for the better around people, not cars, is an achievable near term reality. With a collective effort, we can all ensure that this potential is reached.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today, and I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have.