

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of**

Subcommittee on Innovation, Data, and Commerce Ranking Member Jan Schakowsky

Hearing on “Self-Driving Vehicle Legislative Framework: Enhancing safety, Improving Lives and Mobility, and Beating China.”

July 26, 2023

Autonomous vehicles (AVs) have the potential to make our roads safer and more accessible for all Americans. They hold out the promise of reducing crashes and deaths caused by driver error and provide the possibility of increasing mobility for those with disabilities. At the same time, the deployment of AVs raises serious unresolved questions about how we ensure the safety of these vehicles, their impacts on our workforce, and what recourse consumers have when they are harmed.

Reports of AVs disrupting emergency services, snarling traffic, and obstructing public transportation underscore the importance of developing a framework for AV deployment that ensures that AVs are safe for AV occupants, occupants of other vehicles, pedestrians and all other road users. Public trust in this new technology is essential to the success of AVs.

Existing regulations don't go far enough to ensure that AVs are safe. New and updated regulations are needed to ensure these vehicles are thoroughly tested and monitored for safety prior to being deployed or sold. Standardized safety and performance data is essential to building trust and should be shared with relevant stakeholders.

I am also concerned about the impact of AVs on our workers. Four million Americans make a living driving professionally. We must prioritize these workers as AVs are deployed more broadly. Any new regulatory regime must be pro-worker and offer solutions to help workers transition.

Finally, Americans should have the same right to seek justice in the courts when they are harmed by an autonomous vehicle as when they are harmed by a human driver. We are talking about physical cars on our roads that can cause death and serious injuries. Consumers have received relief by the courts in the past for harms from defective vehicles to manufacturers cheating emissions standards. Americans deserve access to the courts to hold bad actors accountable.

Addressing these safety, workforce, and access to the courts concerns will build public trust in AVs as a safety-enhancing technology that will improve the lives of millions of Americans. But to create such a federal framework, we have to work together. We have to acknowledge and address these serious, long-standing policy concerns as part of any AV legislation. I stand ready to work with my Republican counterparts on that effort.

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And I'd like to thank Congresswoman Dingell for her leadership in this space. Congresswoman Dingell's bill is the result of more than a year of work and represents a step forward in this conversation.