

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce Chair Janice D. Schakowsky
Hearing on “Promises and Perils: The Potential of Automobile Technologies.”

May 18, 2021

Good morning and thank you for joining us.

Today, this subcommittee will hear about the potential for automobile technologies to improve lives and enhance safety.

Let me state upfront: Innovation and revolutionary transportation technologies do not have to come at the expense of our workers or domestic manufacturing.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans are gainfully employed in the automobile manufacturing sector. And more than 4 million Americans work as drivers. As we head into the next era of automobile technologies—including autonomous vehicles—we must ensure economic security for this critical workforce and their families.

We also must ensure that these vehicles are safe and accessible to improve mobility.

2020 was the worst year in a generation for automobile fatalities and injuries despite dramatic decreases in the number of cars on the roads, likely due to more reckless driving on more open roads.

Crash avoidance systems, lane departure warnings, and other advanced driver assistance systems could save tens of thousands of lives per year. However, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has not established safety standards for these technologies.

Given the increase in deaths, a deregulatory approach is unwarranted. The federal government needs to create standards to ensure the safe deployment of technologies available now and in the future.

Standards will create the certainty needed to accelerate innovation. I am sure we will hear about our need to compete with China, but we mustn't do so at the expense of the safety of Americans or the American workforce.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today and I yield the balance of my time to my friend and colleague Representative Dingell.