

Statement of Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade

Hearing on “Looking Under the Hood: The State of NHTSA and Motor Vehicle Safety”

June 26, 2025

Fatalities and injuries on America’s roads remain unacceptably high. Almost 40,000 people died on U.S. roadways last year – that’s an increase of more than 10 percent from a decade ago. And the economic cost of this safety crisis is enormous – almost a trillion dollars a year in medical bills, emergency services, lost productivity, insurance costs, workplace loss, legal expenses, and property damage.

Drunk, distracted, and drowsy driving as well as speeding by a relatively small number of serial offenders are the leading causes of fatalities and injuries on our roads. Right now, there are proven solutions to this safety crisis but unfortunately, they have not been widely adopted by automobile manufacturers.

Congress took action to address automobile safety issues with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in 2021. It directs the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to adopt rules that deter drunk driving, avert child deaths in hot cars, and keep cars in their lanes.

Unfortunately, many of these rulemakings are not yet complete. And the auto industry is suing to challenge one of the lifesaving rules NHTSA (pronounced: *nit-sa*) completed last year. That rule requires new cars to warn the driver and apply the brakes when a collision is imminent.

As our nation’s auto safety agency, NHTSA has an important mandate to save lives by establishing safety standards, investigating vehicle defects, and enforcing recalls. We must ensure NHTSA has the staff and other resources, as well as all the authority it needs to protect Americans on our roadways.

Unfortunately, rather than strengthening NHTSA, the Trump Administration is undermining NHTSA’s critical work to make our roads safer. Staff cuts at NHTSA have led to the departure of many of the highly skilled and experienced employees it needs to move forward with its lifesaving work. NHTSA is also hamstrung by the Trump Administration’s misguided executive orders requiring the repeal of essential auto safety rules before adopting new rules.

Instead of focusing on proven solutions to make cars being sold safer, the Trump Administration is betting on the promise of autonomous vehicles. While driverless vehicles have shown some potential, they are not by themselves a solution to dangerous driving and raise their own concerns.

I call on my Republican colleagues to speak out against this Administration’s dangerous actions. The American people are counting on us to improve the safety of our nation’s roadways.

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And I'd like to yield the remainder of my time to Representative Dingell.