



April 12, 2023

Assembly Member Tasha Boerner Horvath
Chair, California State Assembly Committee on Communications and Conveyance
Capitol Office, 1021 O Street, Suite 4150
P.O. Box 942849-0077
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assembly Member Jim Patterson
Vice Chair, California State Assembly Committee on Communications and Conveyance
Capitol Office, 1021 O Street, Suite 4310
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RE: Assembly Bill 316 (Aguiar-Curry, 2023): OPPOSE

Dear Chair Boerner Horvath, Vice Chair Patterson, and members of the Assembly Communications and Conveyance Committee,

The undersigned organizations write to express strong opposition to AB 316, which would effectively ban autonomous truck deployments by requiring a “human safety operator” to be physically present in all heavy-duty autonomous vehicles (“AV”). We have come together out of

our shared commitment to usher in the promise of autonomous trucking through the safe and expeditious deployment of this technology in California.

Autonomous trucks will make our roads safer, boost supply chain efficiency, and create new, high-quality career opportunities for California workers without causing significant job displacement. As explained in more detail below, prohibiting the operation of heavy-duty AVs unless a human operator is physically present in the vehicle is effectively a permanent ban on driverless trucks that would undermine California's regulatory process, block Californians from accessing the benefits of autonomous trucking technology, and further set back the state on this critical innovation.

The status quo for safety is unacceptable and AB 316 would lock it in. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ("NHTSA") estimates that nearly 43,000 traffic deaths occurred in 2021—representing a 16-year high and an 11% increase in fatalities from 2020. In California alone more than 4,000 lives were lost in motor vehicle crashes in 2021. Nearly 14% of crashes in the United States involve a truck, and 1 in 3 long-haul truck drivers experience a serious crash in their career. In one study, the U.S. Department of Transportation [found](#) that drivers of trucks over 10,000 pounds were responsible in 87% of incidents in which the truck caused the crash. Rather than increase barriers to the deployment of heavy-duty AVs, California should support driverless AV operation because AVs do not drive drunk, text while driving, fall asleep at the wheel, or recklessly speed. Indeed, for over a dozen years, AV technology has been tested on America's public roads and maintains a remarkable safety record. Autonomous trucks are safely operating without human drivers across the country, but AB 316 would prevent California from reaping these safety benefits.

AB 316 would impose a permanent ban on AV trucks in California. By requiring human operators in autonomous trucks—in perpetuity, and with no articulated path for the state to approve fully autonomous solutions—AB 316 would impose a clear ban on driverless trucks in California. Accordingly, the measure effectively locks California into the current and unacceptable level of crashes on its roads and ensures that innovative technology developed in California will not be deployed in the Golden State. The current absence of testing and deployment rules for autonomous trucks in California has already pushed California-based companies to innovate and create jobs in other states that are leading the way, while precluding California consumers, businesses, and its supply chain from realizing the benefits of this critical technology.

AB 316 would thwart California's robust regulatory process. The Legislature passed a comprehensive legislative framework in 2012, which authorized the testing and deployment of AVs pursuant to regulations adopted by the California Highway Patrol ("CHP") and Department of Motor Vehicles ("DMV"). Although the Legislature did not distinguish between vehicle classes when it directed the agencies to adopt such regulations, the regulations currently prohibit heavy-duty AVs from testing or deploying in California. The CHP and the DMV—experienced

safety regulators that have already established a robust regulatory regime for light-duty AVs—are now engaging on autonomous trucks, with the agencies recently taking a critical step to initiate a rulemaking process that addresses AVs over 10,000 pounds. Notably, there has only been *one* workshop on AV trucks and *no* draft rules released to react to, and yet AB 316 takes the draconian step of upsetting this process. Instead of imposing an ex ante human-driver requirement that would serve only to further forestall heavy-duty AV innovation and investment in the state, the Legislature should allow this public, stakeholder-focused rulemaking process to appropriately take its course.

California would continue to fall even further behind other states on autonomous trucking innovation. California was among the first states to adopt a comprehensive legislative framework for AV testing and deployment over a decade ago. AV technology has since been tested and deployed in states across the country and across modalities, and it maintains an incredible safety record. Other states have taken notice, and now, a majority of U.S. states have recognized the numerous benefits of AVs by authorizing AV deployment, including deployment of autonomous trucks. Requiring a human driver to remain in AVs that weigh 10,000 pounds or more would deviate from the overwhelming majority of states’ approaches to AV regulation and California would stand alone as the *only* state to single out autonomous trucks and bar them from effectively deploying in the state.

AVs will create new, high-quality jobs while avoiding displacement of current drivers. In addition to enhancing safety on our roadways, the AV industry is currently leveraging the existing workforce to create new roles for different education and skill levels. Many of the jobs created will not require a college degree, such as service technicians, remote assistance operators, mapping data collectors, delivery packers, and more. Several leading AV developers expect to deploy their technology on long-haul trucking lanes using a transfer hub model, creating new job opportunities at logistics facilities, as well as increasing demand for human short-haul drivers to move goods the first and last mile. Workers with experience in the trucking industry specifically, particularly as truck drivers, offer valuable skills to AV trucking employers. Unfortunately, the U.S. trucking industry is currently short of an estimated 78,000 truck drivers due to a long-term decline in new drivers entering the profession, and an annual turnover rate exceeding 90%. If current trends continue, the shortage could surpass 160,000 in 2031. Driverless truck deployments can help mitigate the driver shortage and increase quality of life for workers in the logistics industry, but supporting innovation is a necessary step to the development of a strong workforce.

Autonomous trucks will bring economic and supply chain efficiency benefits. Autonomous heavy-duty vehicles that operate in interstate commerce will fundamentally change the manner and speed in which goods move in our country while making roads safer for everyone. This technology also presents an array of environmental benefits, including greater fuel efficiency, more efficient use of physical infrastructure, reduced congestion, and reduced agricultural spoilage and related preservation of soil and water resources. Moreover, autonomous long-haul

trucking has the potential to broadly benefit the economy by improving the efficiency of countless industries that rely on moving goods on trucks, such as agriculture, retail, and manufacturing. According to a study funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration, automating long-haul trucking will spur \$111 billion in aggregate investment spending across the U.S. economy, increase total U.S. employment by 26,400 to 35,100 jobs per year on average, and raise annual earnings for all U.S. workers by more than \$200 per worker per year. In California specifically, one study [found](#) that autonomous trucking technology can add \$6.5 billion in economic activity to the state, while bringing greater efficiency to our supply chain, spurring wage gains and job growth.

Autonomous trucks will usher in a new era of mobility that makes California's transportation system safer, more efficient, and more accessible. We strongly believe California should continue to support safety-enhancing policies without foreclosing a future with autonomous trucks. For the reasons described above, we respectfully strongly oppose AB 316.

Sincerely,

Autonomous Vehicle Industry Association (AVIA)
Abate-A-Weed
AT Industrial Products
Aurora
AUVSI
Bay Area Council
California Alliance for Freight Innovation
California Asian Chamber of Commerce
California Chamber of Commerce
California Clothing Recyclers
California Delivery Association
California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce
California Manufacturers & Technology Association
California Retail Hardware Association
California Small Business Association
Cavnue
Chamber of Progress
Citrus Heights Chamber of Commerce
Coalition of California Chambers - Orange County
Coalition of Small and Disabled Veteran Businesses
Consumer Technology Association
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
Daimler Truck

Einride
EMA Truck & Engine Manufacturers Association
Fairfax Lumber and Hardware
Family Business Association of California
Flasher Barricade Association
Gatik
Inland Empire Chamber Alliance
Inland Empire Economic Partnership
Institute for Safer Trucking
International Warehouse and Logistics Association
Kodiak Robotics
Los Angeles Business Council
Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation
Los Altos Chamber of Commerce
Luminar
MEMA, The Vehicle Suppliers Association
Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association
Mountain View Chamber of Commerce
Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce
Partnership for Transportation Innovation and Opportunity
Plus
Rich Desmond, Board Chair, Sacramento County
Safe Kids Worldwide
San Francisco Chamber of Commerce
San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership
San Jose Chamber of Commerce
Seabreeze Books and Charts
sf.citi
Silicon Valley Leadership Group
Spartan Radar
Star Milling Co.
Sunnyvale Chamber of Commerce
TechNet
TuSimple
US Xpress
Waabi
Waymo