



March 14, 2022

Representative Tim Hennessey
313 Main Capitol Building
P.O. Box 202026
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2026

Representative Mike Carroll
300 Main Capitol Building
P.O. Box 202118
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2118

Dear Chair Hennessey, Chair Carroll, and honorable Members of the Transportation Committee,

The Autonomous Vehicle Industry Association (“AVIA”) writes to express strong support for HB 2398. By way of background, AVIA is comprised of the world’s leading technology, ridesharing, trucking, and automotive companies that are developing and manufacturing autonomous vehicle technology. Our mission is to realize the benefits of autonomous vehicles (i.e., SAE Levels 4 and 5-capable vehicles) and support the safe and expeditious deployment of this technology. We appreciate the opportunity to engage with the Committee to support HB 2398, which will promote the safe testing and deployment of autonomous vehicles (“AVs”) on Pennsylvania roads and highways and help advance Pennsylvania's position as a world-leader in the AV ecosystem.

AVIA was founded in 2016 to be the voice of the nascent AV industry. Since that time, our membership has grown to include 17 companies, each dedicated to bringing the many benefits of AVs to the public in a safe and swift manner. Additionally, a number of our members are specifically working to bring these benefits to the Commonwealth and call Pennsylvania home. As members of this Committee know, Argo AI and Aurora are both headquartered in Pittsburgh and are actively testing AVs here. Motional likewise has an office in Pittsburgh and is testing in the area. Waymo also recently opened its first Pittsburgh office.

Pennsylvania has long since recognized the significant value AVs can bring to the Commonwealth and its residents. By expressly authorizing driverless AV operations in Pennsylvania, HB 2398 takes a needed step forward to ensure that the AVs will be brought to Pennsylvania and stay here. AVs have tremendous potential safety, mobility, and efficiency benefits, holding the potential both to save lives and to change the way we move. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (“NHTSA”) estimates that nearly 39,000 Americans died



in motor vehicle crashes in 2020. The numbers released thus far for 2021 appear to be even worse—NHTSA recently reported that nearly 32,00 Americans died on our roads in the first nine months of 2021. Those deaths represent the highest number of fatalities in the first nine months of any year in the past 15 years. Moreover, in Pennsylvania specifically, traffic fatalities increased 9.7 percent last year.

These fatality numbers reveal a pattern of increasingly unsafe driving that is occurring in Pennsylvania and across the country. The U.S. Department of Transportation reiterated last month that the overwhelming majority of traffic fatalities involve at least one human behavioral issue as a contributing factor. For example, one person is killed every 52 minutes due to drunk-driving. The ongoing tragedy on our roadways underscores the need to support AV deployment and driverless operations. AVs have the potential to reduce fatal traffic crashes because, unlike human drivers, AVs will never drive drunk, drowsy, or distracted—all major contributors to roadway deaths.

Pennsylvania is also home to millions of individuals—including seniors and those with visual impairments—who stand to greatly benefit from the increased safety and mobility that AVs could provide. In addition to offering safety and mobility benefits, autonomous driving technology can also help reduce traffic congestion, improve environmental quality, and advance transportation efficiency. For example, autonomous trucks hold the promise of increasing the safety and efficiency of freight movement. A freight network that includes autonomous trucks can lower costs and reduce time to market for Pennsylvania's agricultural, manufacturing, retail, and other industries.

In addition, the AV industry is currently creating new jobs and bringing new investment, resources, and human capital to Pennsylvania. A study performed for the Pittsburgh-based Regional Industrial Development Corporation found that in the Pittsburgh region alone the autonomous vehicle industry has created 6,500 new jobs, and the global autonomous vehicle industry could be worth \$1 trillion globally by 2026.¹ The further development of the AV industry is poised to support the economic competitiveness of the Commonwealth and help grow its economy—but it is critical to enable the deployment of AVs to do so. By saving lives, creating jobs, and reducing costs for consumers the economic benefits of AVs promise to be significant in the decades to come. Additionally, AV trucking alone is anticipated to produce substantial economic benefits for both consumers and workers.

¹ TEconomy Partners, Forefront: Securing Pittsburgh's Break-out Position in Autonomous Mobile Systems ES-1-2 (2021), <https://ridc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/PGH-Autonomy-Report-Executive-Summary.pdf>.



AVIA strongly supports the enactment of HB 2398 to bring benefits like these to the Commonwealth. Not only would the bill ensure that the benefits of AVs can be brought safely and swiftly to Pennsylvania, it also reflects the approach to AV regulation that many other states have taken—18 states have enacted similar laws. That number is rapidly growing, with Oklahoma expected to pass such a law in the coming weeks and multiple other states considering similar legislation.

Additionally, just last week, the West Virginia legislature took decisive action to promote AVs by passing HB 4787, which permits the deployment of AVs with or without a human driver. Through this bill, West Virginia has positioned itself to become a leader in AVs and attract top talent to the state. The New York legislature is also currently considering bills, similar to West Virginia's HB 4787, that also would permit the deployment of AVs with or without a human driver. Further, Ohio has allowed driverless testing of AVs for multiple years. As neighboring states continue to recognize the benefits of AVs and take action to support AVs, Pennsylvania should swiftly do the same to retain its leadership position in the AV ecosystem, support AV companies located here in Pennsylvania, and attract new AV companies and jobs to the Commonwealth.

For the above reasons, AVIA strongly supports HB 2398 and encourages the Committee to act favorably on the legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ariel S. Wolf', is written over a faint, light blue circular stamp or watermark.

Ariel S. Wolf
General Counsel
Autonomous Vehicle Industry Association