



April 26, 2021

Senator Maria Cantwell
Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation

Senator Gary Peters
Chair
Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation,
Maritime, Freight, and Ports

Dear Committee Chair Cantwell and Subcommittee Chair Peters:

As a business group devoted to a progressive future, we write to express our strong support for the **Peters-Thune autonomous vehicles amendment** to the Endless Frontier Act before the Committee.

Our organization, the Chamber of Progress (progresschamber.org), is a new center-left tech industry coalition promoting technology's progressive future. We work to ensure that all Americans benefit from technological leaps, and our Advisory Board is composed of Democratic elected officials, political appointees, civil society representatives, and industry leaders.

Our organization's commitment to a progressive society, economy, and workforce sets us apart from other business groups. For example, we strongly support federal voting rights legislation (S. 1 and H.R. 4); support President Biden's proposed corporate tax increase to fund infrastructure investments; back a national emissions reduction target of 50% by 2030; and support a stronger social safety net. We also strongly support the Endless Frontier Act, to keep America competitive in the world.

Advancing the Peters-Thune amendment is **a smart and concrete step that the Senate can take this year to encourage the safe testing and deployment of autonomous vehicles** that better connect our communities, workers, and families.

Autonomous vehicles can help advance a number of progressive goals, including:

- **Assisting mobility-challenged people:** Autonomous vehicles can provide revolutionary new mobility and freedom to many underserved populations including the visually impaired as well as older Americans who may no longer possess a driver's license.
- **Reducing car dependence:** By de-linking a car from a driver or owner, autonomous vehicles can facilitate greater carsharing and reduce the demand for car ownership. With privately-owned cars parked 95 percent of the time, this could free up city right-of-way to be used for pedestrians, cyclists, and public space.
- **Reducing vehicle emissions:** Autonomous passenger vehicles are nearly always fully electric or hybrid. Because of battery needs, the two technologies inherently work well together. By facilitating flexible, on-demand carsharing and adaptive routing, autonomous vehicles can spend less time idling in traffic, contributing to lower emissions. A 2016 report found that autonomous

vehicles could reduce total U.S. road transport energy use by as much as 50 percent.

- **Reducing traffic fatalities:** Human error causes up to 93 percent of traffic accidents. Autonomous vehicles won't drive while distracted, tired, texting, or inebriated, will obey traffic laws, and will be equipped with technology like automatic braking to prevent collisions. Their widespread adoption will make a serious dent in the estimated 40,000 deaths from car accidents each year.

The Peters-Thune amendment is a targeted approach to encouraging American leadership in safe autonomous vehicle technology. The amendment raises NHTSA's existing low cap on the number of exempt autonomous vehicles allowed without "driver" features like steering wheels, pedals, or mirrors. NHTSA will remain in complete control over the exemptions granted to individual manufacturers and operators, and can place safety-related requirements on those operators.

Autonomous vehicles represent an area of technology where the United States maintains an edge over the world, **but that edge is not assured**. We believe it is appropriate to amend the Endless Frontier Act with the Peters-Thune autonomous vehicles amendment in order to help accelerate the next generation of safe autonomous vehicle technology in America.

Sincerely,



Adam Kovacevich
CEO and Founder
Chamber of Progress