



February 1, 2022

**Oppose HB 1731: Will Deter Autonomous Vehicle Operations in Washington;  
Support HB 2070 Instead**

Representative Jake Fey  
Chair  
House Transportation Committee  
Washington State Legislature

Dear Chair Fey and members of the committee,

Autonomous vehicles have the potential to make Washington a safer, more convenient, and more equitable place to live -- but only if it takes a smart approach to AV regulation.

We urge you to **oppose HB 1731** which could set back the future promise of autonomous vehicles for Washington.

Our organization works to ensure that all Americans benefit from technological leaps, and our commitment to a progressive society, economy, and workforce sets us apart from other business groups. For example, we strongly support federal legislation to promote voting rights; supported President Biden's proposed corporate tax increase; and back a national emissions reduction target of 50% by 2030.

We are also strong supporters of autonomous vehicle development because of its positive impacts on our communities. However, HB 1731 erects onerous obstacles that will deter AV operations and reduce the opportunity for Washingtonians to enjoy the many benefits AVs have to offer.

We ask this committee to **instead support HB 2070**, which would amend the existing law regulating AV testing in a manner that would better encourage AV operations.

**First, autonomous vehicles will help close the food gap.** All Washington residents should have access to healthy, affordable food options in their neighborhoods. Residents in low food access areas continue to be plagued by the food desert crisis and are forced to travel far away to get to grocery stores. In some communities AVs are delivering groceries and food via low-speed, seatless, passengerless autonomous vehicles. This would give Washington residents that live outside food-rich areas the same convenient and affordable access to fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, and meat they need to live happily and healthily.

**Second, autonomous vehicles will help close the accessibility gap.** One in five Washingtonians live with a disability.<sup>1</sup> Though public transit is available, it is harder for those with disabilities to navigate by bus or train in times of inclement weather, in times when an accessible stop is shut down, or when there is no room for their equipment on a busy day. For the blind and other people living with disabilities, safe autonomous vehicles can't arrive fast enough.

**Third, autonomous vehicles will bring safer streets and reduce the number of accidents.** As of December 10, 2021, a total of 577 people died in traffic related accidents in Washington.<sup>2</sup> Research shows that at least 90% of car crashes are caused by human error, and studies suggest that putting AVs on the road now could save hundreds of thousands of lives over the long term. By eliminating cases of distracted drivers, drivers under the influence, or geographically lost drivers, AVs can reduce the number of pedestrian and bike fatalities that occur in Washington.

**Fourth, autonomous trucking can cut down on Washington's trucker shortage and supply chain issues.** Across the country, the trucking industry has experienced extreme turnover and widespread job vacancies, resulting in significant delays to product shipments and rising prices for basic necessities. Though exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, retention has been an issue in trucking for decades. The American Trucking Association reports an annual turnover rate of 90 percent and projects that the nationwide shortage of truckers will double to over 160,000 job vacancies by 2030.<sup>3</sup> Autonomous vehicles offer a solution to help fill the gap left by a strained labor market and high demand for timely shipping.

**Finally, autonomous vehicles will spur new jobs in Washington.** The Federal Department of Transportation reported in 2021 that the use of automation systems would create jobs in the transportation and logistics industries, and other business sectors.<sup>4</sup> The US Department of Labor and its state partners have created job transition and retraining programs to assist those affected by the introduction of autonomy. These entities help drivers adapt to new technologies and market conditions, helping them find gainful employment.

With the tremendous potential of autonomous vehicles to make Washington a safer and more equitable state, it is so important to test and deploy autonomous vehicles without delay.

However, HB 1731 puts an undue burden on AV operators by implementing duplicative, unnecessary reporting requirements and mandating a burdensome notification process. Passing HB 1731 would unnecessarily prolong the future promise of autonomous vehicles for Washington.

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<sup>1</sup> *Disability & Health U.S. State Profile Data for Washington (Adults 18+ years of age)*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (Jan. 2022)  
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/impacts/washington.html>

<sup>2</sup> Deedee Sun, *Fatal car crashes are surging – psychologist explains why*, Kiro7, (Jan. 2022)  
<https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/fatal-car-crashes-are-surging-psychologist-explains-why/IKMW2KKO65ASHHKGHIGWO452U/>

<sup>3</sup> Michelle Fleury, *How will the US deal with a shortage of 80,000 truckers?*, BBC News, (Dec. 2021)  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-59136957>

<sup>4</sup> *Driving Automation Systems in Long Haul Trucking and Bus Transit*, U.S. Department of Transportation, (Jan. 2022)  
<https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2021-01/Driving%20Automation%20Systems%20in%20Long%20Haul%20Trucking%20and%20Bus%20Transit%20Preliminary%20Analysis%20of%20Potential%20Workforce%20Impacts.pdf>

Because of this, we encourage this committee to **oppose HB 1731 and support HB 2070**, which would clarify obligations for entities operating AVs and ensure that law enforcement is properly notified and given the information needed to safely engage with AVs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Williams', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Montana Williams  
Director of State & Local Public Policy  
Chamber of Progress