



March 27, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
Senate Majority Leader  
Legislative Office Building, 907  
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Carl Heastie  
Speaker of the Assembly  
Legislative Office Building, 932  
Albany, NY 12248

The Honorable Liz Krueger  
Chairwoman, Senate Finance  
Capitol Building, 416  
Albany, NY 12248

The Honorable Helene Weinstein  
Chairwoman, Assembly Ways & Means  
Legislative Office Building, 923  
Albany, NY 12248

The Honorable Tim Kennedy  
Chairman, Senate Transportation  
Legislative Office Building, 708  
Albany, NY 12248

The Honorable William B. Magnarelli  
Chairman, Assembly Transportation  
Legislative Office Building, 830  
Albany, NY 12248

**Re: Support S1012B/A539B: Autonomous Vehicles**

Dear Governor Hochul, Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie,

On behalf of Chamber of Progress, a tech industry coalition promoting technology's progressive future, we write to urge you to **support S1012B/A539B**.

We are strong supporters of autonomous vehicles because of their potential to save hundreds of thousands of lives and benefit our communities – promoting sustainability, mitigating transit and food accessibility gaps, and increasing mobility for the elderly and disabled.

**Autonomous vehicles will bring safer streets and reduce the number of accidents.** The National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA) released crash data reporting nearly 43,000 lives were lost in traffic-related fatalities in 2022.<sup>1</sup> Between 2019 and 2021, traffic deaths and fatalities in the United States rose by 17.5 percent - the largest two-year increase since World War II.<sup>2</sup> In New York City in February this year alone, there were nearly 7,000 accidents. More than a fourth of those crashes involved distracted driving.<sup>3</sup>

Distracted driving, drunk and impaired driving, speeding, and failing to wear a seatbelt remain the leading causes of death on American roads.<sup>4</sup> But AVs never drive distracted, drunk, or fatigued. And their safety record is impeccable. In fact, a recently published study found that autonomous ridesharing services in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Phoenix experienced 57% fewer police-reported crashes and 85% fewer crashes involving injuries compared to human drivers.<sup>5</sup>

**Autonomous vehicles promote sustainability efforts.** Through high-speed driving, braking, and re-acceleration, humans burn a lot of gas and energy while driving.<sup>6</sup> According to the Southwest Research Institute, through connectivity and automation, AVs can reach 20% improvement in fuel efficiency.<sup>7</sup> Since AVs are programmed to follow traffic rules and speed limits, they will ultimately use less gas and energy.

**AVs will help close the food gap.** All New York 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 New York 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.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/traffic-crash-death-estimates-2022#:~:text=The%20National%20Highway%20Traffic%20Safety,42%2C939%20fatalities%20reported%20for%202021.>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/15/briefing/vehicle-crashes-deaths-pandemic.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/traffic-data/traffic-data-collision.page>

<sup>4</sup> <https://madd.org/press-release/epidemic-plaguing-americas-roads-reaches-historic-levels/c>

<sup>5</sup> <https://waymo.com/blog/2023/12/waymo-significantly-outperforms-comparable-human-benchmarks-over-7-million/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://greenerideal.com/news/vehicles/driverless-cars-environmental-benefits/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.swri.org/press-release/vehicle-fuel-efficiency-improvement-connectivity-automation-arpa-nextcar>

**Autonomous vehicles will help close the accessibility gap.** One in five adult New Yorkers live with a disability<sup>8</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.

**Autonomous vehicles are also popular with voters.** A survey commissioned by Chamber of Progress found that 53% of voters are ready to ride in an AV now or in the next five years, and the same number supported the testing and deployment of AVs in their state.<sup>9</sup> Union members also overwhelmingly support the deployment of AVs, with 75% of respondents saying they supported testing AVs in their state. In San Francisco, in the month after they were opened to the public, autonomous rideshare services logged over 36,000 paid trips.<sup>10</sup> Voters and consumers are excited about the possibilities of autonomous vehicles.

To increase transportation options, promote sustainable transportation, and make New York roads safer, **we urge you to support this bill.**

Thank you.

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.health.ny.gov/community/disability/prevalence.htm#:~:text=Based%20on%20responses%20to%20the.an%20impairment%20or%20health%20condition>

<sup>9</sup><https://progresschamber.org/morning-consult-poll-dems-biden-voters-union-members-support-autonomous-vehicles/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/cruise-waymo-san-francisco-18472568.php>