

May 16, 2006

The Honorable Joe Knollenberg, Chair  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, Housing and Urban Development,  
the Judiciary, District of Columbia  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Knollenberg:

We are writing to lend our strong support for increasing funds for two important data collection programs, the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) and the National Automotive Sampling System/Crashworthiness Data System (NASS/CDS). These two programs were created by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in the 1970s and are the cornerstone of motor vehicle crash data that provide information on death and injury causes and trends.

The information collected from FARS and the NASS/CDS program form the database that enables government officials, researchers, industry, as well as health and safety organizations to develop, implement and evaluate safety countermeasures addressing crashes that result in nearly 43,000 motor vehicle deaths and 3 million injuries each year.

For the past ten years both the FARS and NASS data collection programs have been level-funded with only slight increases to account for inflation. Unfortunately, these funding levels have hindered quality control and reduced the capacity of both data bases to provide critical information on motor vehicle crashes. For example, in FARS there are serious gaps in reporting by states on the use of occupant restraints or tests determining blood alcohol concentration levels in fatal crashes. Budget cuts for NASS have dramatically reduced the capability of this program to less than a quarter of its intended design size of 75 teams across the country collecting data on 19,000 crashes. Today, there are only 27 teams and the number of crashes in which data is collected has dropped to about 4,500 cases.

In order to improve the quality of data collected by FARS and NASS/CDS, we urge additional funding of at least \$1 million in FY 2007 for each program. NHTSA's traffic and vehicle safety programs are some of the most cost-effective public health countermeasures in the federal government. Improvements to the FARS and NASS/CDC data collection programs will help ensure that federal funds for initiatives to encourage seat belt use, reduce impaired driving, protect children, and improve vehicle safety are well spent and save lives.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Highway & Auto Safety

Allstate Insurance Company

Center for Auto Safety

Consumer Federation of America

Emergency Nurses Association

Mothers Against Drunk Driving

State Farm Insurance Companies

TRUNC

Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers

Automotive Coalition for Traffic Safety

Coalition for American Trauma Care

Consumers for Auto Reliability & Safety

KIDS AND CARS

Public Citizen

Truck Safety Coalition

Brain Injury Association of America