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The Honorable John Thune
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
Chairman
512 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
Ranking Member
512 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson:

We write in strong support of the nomination of the Honorable Elaine Chao to be the next Secretary of Transportation, and respectfully urge the Committee to confirm her. This is an important time to address the effectiveness and safety of the U.S. Transportation System, and we believe the Nominee has the skills and experience to lead the U.S. Department of Transportation (DoT).

It should come as no surprise that at Safe Kids we place a special emphasis on the Secretary's indispensable role in preserving and improving the safety of the system, especially for the children who travel on it. The DoT is one of several agencies which act as an indispensable protective umbrella over our kids and help parents do the best they can to keep their kids safe. We are optimistic because in response to the Committee's question about her top three priorities, the Nominee unequivocally said "enforcement of safety measures" would be her job number one.

There are several notable ways in which the DoT plays a crucial child safety role. It is the principal steward of the National Highway System, as well as moving America by water, in the air, on tracks and on trucks. On highway safety, we are at a turning point because, after decades of declining fatalities, we are seeing a spike in road deaths involving people of all ages. Between 2014 and 2015 we saw a 7.2 percent increase in highway deaths, the largest single year increase in 30 years. The fatality increase was 9.7 percent for teenagers.

In addition, DoT sets safety standards for motor vehicles and child restraint systems, and manages the process for removing dangerous products from the roads. The recall system has been severely tested in recent years by recalls in the millions of products removed from the marketplace or fast-tracked for life-saving repairs. It provides national leadership on creating safe school zones, developing bike lanes in cities and promotes efforts to make different modes of travel move more safely. The development of autonomous cars and drones is a perfect example of the importance of the balancing role the Department plays. They are innovations which can bring significant economic progress but with compelling safety challenges. For example, how does an autonomous motor vehicle determine a child is securely and correctly restrained in a car seat?

Ms. Chao has the range of experiences necessary to fulfill the Secretary's mandates at this critical time. Having served in high-level roles at DoT, she has a deep appreciation of what the Department can achieve with clear direction and strategic goals. Ms. Chao understands the proper role of a cabinet secretary, having served as Labor Secretary under President George W. Bush for two terms. She is a committed public servant who understands non-profit community. She joined The United Way of America when it needed her kind of strength to restore our confidence in that important U.S. institution. Her experience in finance will be critical in searching for and implementing smart ways to fund the infrastructure plans of the new Administration, which we welcome.

We hope the Committee will vote in favor of Ms. Chao's confirmation so she can begin her work at DoT with the vigor and effectiveness we have become accustomed to from her long career of service to the nation.

Sincerely,



Anthony Green
Director, Public Policy

