

STATEMENT OF MARIANNE KARTH

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Raleigh, NC

My name is Marianne Karth and I am a volunteer with the Truck Safety Coalition. On May 4, 2013, my life was changed forever. As I was driving with my three youngest children from North Carolina to Texas to celebrate a wedding, college graduations, and birthdays, we found our journey abruptly ended.

A large truck did not stop in time for slowed traffic and slammed into our car. The impact spun our car around and the truck hit our car a second time—forcing it backward and underneath a second truck's trailer.

My son and I, after being extricated with the Jaws of Life, survived. But my daughters, AnnaLeah (17) and Mary (13), were in the back seat of the car, which went underneath the trailer. AnnaLeah was killed instantly. Mary died a few days later as a result of her injuries.

None of this needed to happen. Our crash underscores the need for stronger underride guards on motor carriers, which, when strengthened have been shown to prevent horrific underride injuries and save lives.

After experiencing firsthand the devastation and loss that a single truck can inflict, I am greatly concerned about the damage that even bigger trucks would bring, especially if drivers are not appropriately trained to handle them. By increasing the lengths of double-trailer trucks from 28-feet to 33-feet, the government would be opening the door for more underride crashes. Despite research which proves that an increase would mean more danger to the public, proponents are opting for profit and essentially putting safety in the back seat—which is exactly where my daughters were sitting when their lives, their hopes, and their futures were taken from them.

Meanwhile, many in the industry continually reject attempts to ensure that trucks pay their fair share to fix the damage they inflict in crashes. Minimum insurance levels for motor carriers have never been increased since it was set over 35 years ago—not even to account for inflation. As a result, who bears the brunt of these truck crashes? Not the trucking companies. If all the industry were, instead, required to absorb more of the losses they cause, significant changes would most likely occur--resulting in safer highways for us all.

U.S. Secretary of Transportation, North Carolina's own Anthony Foxx, must exercise his authority, as was intended by Congress, and do what no Secretary before him has done. He needs to set minimum insurance at a responsible level that will encourage safe underwriting and safe operations .

As I stand before you today, with the second anniversary of my family's crash just barely past us, I urge Congress to listen to the American people and once and for all reject dangerous truck size and weight increases, and do all that they can to strengthen existing, proven, life-saving technologies that could prevent more families from experiencing what mine has had to endure.