

Testimony of Meera Joshi
Nominee to be Administrator for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
Before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
September 15, 2021

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, and Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today, during National Truck Driver Appreciation Week, as President Biden's nominee to be the Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) at the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Thank you President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg for your support and leadership. Thanks to the professional women and men of FMCSA whose deep commitment to reducing commercial motor vehicle crashes and fatalities is unparalleled. It would be an honor to lead them on this life saving mission.

Thank you to my family, my husband, my anchor, Charlie, our children, Louise, David, Marco, and Ava, and my sister Shyamala for their support of my career in public service. Thanks to my parents, Susan and Aravind who instilled in me the importance of people centered purpose.

Commercial motor vehicles, aka large trucks and buses, are not only essential to America's thriving economy, transporting over 70% of the Nation's freight as well as our loved ones, they are critical in crisis. Throughout COVID, the trucking industry has been at the forefront, moving vaccines, testing supplies and oxygen. When the Colonial Pipeline was breached, tank trucks transported gas to stations and, ultimately, into Americans' cars. Most recently, during Hurricane Ida, large trucks brought emergency supplies to our hardest hit regions.

Our Nation's motorcoach industry likewise remains a critical transportation mode. Pre-COVID, the industry safely and sustainably transported well over 500 million passengers across the Nation each year. The entire industry is now hard at work reestablishing itself as a preferred mode of interstate passenger travel.

Ensuring the safety of the women and men literally driving the commercial motor vehicle industry and all those that they share the road with is my personal and utmost priority.

Sadly, since 2009, commercial motor vehicle-related roadway fatalities in the United States have steadily risen, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives of men, women, and children. And, every year, over 800 of these victims are large truck or bus drivers.

I am deeply committed to the undisputed work ahead, reversing this fatal trend.

I am no stranger to roadway tragedy and implementing strategies to improve safety. As head of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, I was at the forefront of the city's Vision Zero Campaign, setting the rules of the road for over 150,000 professional taxi and for hire drivers. I witnessed firsthand the pain of families who had lost loved ones to traffic violence and ensured that all new drivers knew their names and the names of those they lost. It was also

important to me to publicly acknowledge the city's highly skilled professional drivers, women and men, who, year after year safely transported passengers throughout congested city streets. I initiated an annual driver honor roll to recognize these drivers and to motivate newer drivers to prioritize safety. I led pilots to integrate innovative vehicle safety technology, increased the effectiveness of roadway enforcement and inspections, and used data analytics to identify and remove the most dangerous drivers from the road and operators from the industry. I worked collaboratively with drivers, large and small operators, tech companies, safety and labor advocates, elected officials, their constituents, passengers as well as the general public. The result of these productive relationships was balanced policy that raised safety and accountability standards for all. This experience is the source of my desire and belief that I can make a positive difference nationwide in roadway safety as Administrator of the FMCSA.

My mission is further strengthened by this committee's historic investment in commercial motor vehicle safety through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 ("IIJA"). IIJA funding creates American jobs, allowing FMCSA's State partners to hire additional personnel for roadside inspections and reach the true breadth of the vast commercial motor vehicle industry; it provides FMCSA and States the opportunity to increase investigative and enforcement resources focused on high risk motor carriers and in high crash zones. IIJA supports essential upgrades to State's IT infrastructure to improve critical commercial motor vehicle driver data collection and transfer and allows for the integration of safety technology in the commercial motor vehicle fleet. In short, IIJA investment in commercial motor vehicle safety will save lives.

If I have the honor of being confirmed as the Administrator of FMCSA, I commit to working with members of this Committee to strengthen the safety of the commercial motor vehicle sector. All of us using our Nation's roadways are someone's loved ones, and we all deserve to get to where we are going unharmed.

In closing, thank you again for your consideration and the opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.