

Testimony of Robin Hutcheson
Nominee to be Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
Before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
June 8, 2022

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the nominee for Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg for selecting me to serve in this important role.

I'm joined here today by my husband David Hutcheson, an accomplished neuroscientist and professor at the University of Utah, and whose constant love and support makes it possible for me to continue to work in public service. I also want to thank my parents and extended family who are watching today, and I know are proud to see this moment.

I am grateful to all the FMCSA employees who have dedicated their careers to our country in pursuit of safer roadways and a safer commercial motor vehicle and motorcoach industry. For their tireless work, I offer a public thank you. It would be an honor to lead FMCSA employees across the Nation in carrying out our life-saving mission.

I would also like to note the honor of being here today in front of Senators who represent the special places I have called home: Connecticut, Colorado, Montana, Minnesota, and Utah, all of which have shaped my view of the United States we serve.

Currently, there is a spotlight on the trucking and motorcoach industry, and, if confirmed, I intend to keep the light shining, as we work to carry out the primary safety mission of FMCSA. Fatalities are increasing dramatically on our Nation's roadways, with recent data showing that over 40,000 people lost their lives in 2021. Of those lost, 800 were commercial motor vehicle drivers. Roadway safety affects not only those whose lives were lost, but the family members and loved ones who suffer the grief of loss. We must do better, and I am committed to working with FMCSA, our stakeholders, and Member offices to reverse this unacceptable trend.

In my previous position within the Department of Transportation as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Safety Policy, I led the development of the National Roadway Safety Strategy. The Strategy identifies numerous actions to improve safety for the men and women driving the commercial motor vehicle industry and all those with whom they share the road. For FMCSA, such actions include increasing our investigations in high-risk carriers, and technology investments to close registration loopholes that would prevent unsafe drivers from ever being on the road.

Now, more than ever, Americans are acutely tuned into how our goods get to our homes – from the flour for the bread we eat, the clothes we wear, the bed we sleep in - we all have a better understanding that it probably came on a truck. People, in this case, drivers, are the most important part of the industry. It is a difficult job, and men and women have been working long hours to literally keep our economy rolling in the face of unprecedented challenges.

The importance of our nation's motorcoach industry, responsible for safely transporting passengers throughout the Country, was underscored throughout the last few years. Approximately 300 companies and over 36,000 vehicles sat parked during the early days of the pandemic. The industry has put in the work to reestablish itself for the traveling American public.

The work of FMCSA and the industry is supported by the historic passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. I want to thank you all for the opportunity to work with you on the unprecedented investment, which will allow not only FMCSA, but our State and local partners, to carry out safety priorities to achieve our ambitious goal of zero fatalities on our Nation's roadways.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law also dedicates resources to assisting the truck driving profession by creating a better, safer pipeline of drivers and improving recruitment and retention in the profession. I have and will continue to engage in discussion, ride-alongs, and other forums to deepen my understanding of the needs of drivers, and all of our critical stakeholders.

In the twenty-five years I have worked in the transportation industry, safety has always been the at the core of my work. I have had the opportunity to lead a large organization with front line and operational staff with boots on the ground, like those at FMCSA. I have learned that the foundation of successful leadership requires collaboration and transparency within the Agency and across stakeholder and Congressional relationships.

If confirmed, I will put my experience and dedication to work for the employees of FMCSA, the commercial motor vehicle industry, and the people of the United States of America. Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to answering your questions.