

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 4, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy,

We urge the Department of Transportation to withdraw the proposed Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Rule III for Model Years 2022 to 2031 Passenger Cars and Light Trucks. These rollbacks to the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) Standards would increase costs for hardworking Americans, reduce vehicle efficiency, and increase our reliance on foreign oil imports—all of which directly contravene the requirements and intent of Congress under the U.S. Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA) and subsequent amendments, including from the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA).

Under EPCA, the Secretary and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) have an obligation to ensure that new vehicles being sold achieve the maximum feasible fuel economy standard—this proposal falls significantly short of achieving this. EISA even set a baseline standard for a combined fuel economy average of at least 35 miles per gallon by model year (MY) 2020 for the total fleet of passenger and non-passenger automobiles.<sup>1</sup> However, the Administration’s new proposed standards set a goal of reaching a fleetwide average of 34.5 miles per gallon in MY 2031. This is a clear violation of the maximum feasibility requirements, since according to NHTSA, automakers are already exceeding the proposed MY2031 standards with a fleetwide average of 35.4 miles per gallon in MY 2024.<sup>2</sup> The proposal would also dismantle key compliance mechanisms that have long provided automakers with flexibility and incentivized innovation, penalizing those who lead and rewarding those who lag.

Historically, strong CAFE standards have driven American innovation, from hybridization and advanced powertrains to aerodynamic breakthroughs. We currently have widely available and well-proven tools to keep improving fuel economy, which save Americans money at the pump and deliver more affordable, efficient, cleaner vehicles.

Rolling back fuel efficiency standards would threaten American energy independence by deepening our reliance on foreign oil. Only 60% of the oil refined by U.S. fuel refineries is extracted in the United States. The remaining 40% is imported, making our gas-guzzling transportation system extremely dependent on other countries. Continuing dependence on global oil markets further links the costs Americans pay at the pump to the whims of countries like Russia, whose invasion of Ukraine resulted in a price shock for consumers of 50 cents per gallon in just seven days.

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<sup>1</sup> 49 U.S. Code § 32902(b)(2)(A)

<sup>2</sup> 90 Fed. Reg. 56448, Table I-2

Fuel economy improvements have saved more than two trillion gallons of gasoline since 1975, enough to run every car and light truck in the U.S. for more than 15 years.<sup>3</sup> The current existing standards were expected to save Americans more than \$84 billion in fuel costs and other health benefits, and achieve 50.4 miles per gallon in fuel efficiency by 2031. Since 2001, efficiency improvements, driven by CAFE standards, have saved consumers over \$9,000 in fuel costs for the average new car purchased in 2024.<sup>4</sup> This is especially important, considering that transportation costs are the second-largest household expenditure, behind housing, for American families, accounting for 15 percent of average household spending.<sup>5</sup> Strong fuel economy standards also incentivize manufacturers to offer smaller, efficient vehicles that are also more likely to be cheaper to purchase. Weakening these standards will allow auto manufacturers to continue to prioritize larger vehicles that produce higher profit margins—a shift that is already driving up the cost of cars.

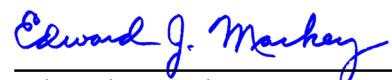
In addition to fuel cost savings, fuel economy standards also deliver direct health benefits as less fuel is burned. While designed to curb the consumption of fuel and lower consumer costs, the 2024 fuel economy standards were also estimated to dramatically reduce emissions of nitrogen oxide, particulate matter, and volatile organic compounds, all of which cause significant health harms. The proposal to weaken these standards admits that there will be damage to air quality and our health, resulting in more than 450 premature deaths, nearly 14,000 asthma exacerbations, and other health emergencies. This proposed rule is dangerous and will lead to more respiratory diseases and hospital visits at a time when health care prices are already skyrocketing—worsening the ongoing affordability crisis facing American households today.

This damaging and costly proposal comes on the heels of the Trump Administration’s proposal to eliminate all life-saving greenhouse gas emission standards from vehicles and represents yet another bizarre attack on policies that cut fuel, energy, and health care costs for American households. We strongly urge the Department of Transportation to withdraw this misguided CAFE proposal and maintain the existing fuel economy standards. Weakening the fuel economy standards and forcing Americans to purchase more expensive, gas-guzzling vehicles would exacerbate the cost-of-living crisis and serve as yet another betrayal of President Trump’s promise to lower energy costs for the American people.

Sincerely,



Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

<sup>3</sup> Natural Resources Defense Council. (2022, March). *The Real Road To Energy Independence: Clean Car And Fuel Economy Standards*. <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/energy-independence-clean-car-standards-fs.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Carto, C. (2025, January 14). *Blog: Strong Efficiency and Emissions Standards Deliver Thousands in Fuel Savings for Consumers*. Consumer Reports. <https://advocacy.consumerreports.org/research/blog-strong-efficiency-and-emissions-standards-deliver-thousands-in-fuel-savings-for-consumers/>

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Transportation Statistics. (2023, September 19). *The Household Cost of Transportation: Is it Affordable?*. U.S. Department of Transportation. <https://www.bts.gov/data-spotlight/household-cost-transportation-it-affordable>



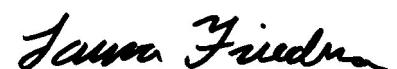
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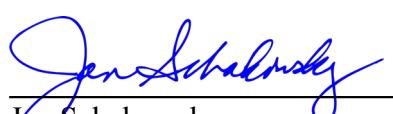
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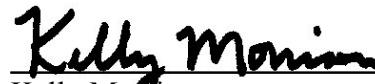
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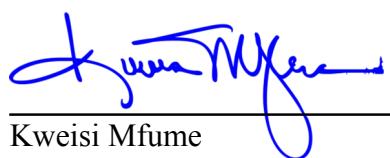
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