



TESTIMONY REGARDING S.B. 909
Maryland Judicial Proceedings Committee
Wednesday, March 4 at 1:00 PM

Dear Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

I am India Herdman, Senior Policy Advisor at Tesla, and I am here today in support of Maryland S.B. 909, which establishes a forward-thinking framework for the safe deployment of fully autonomous vehicles (AVs) in the state. Tesla applauds Maryland's effort in modernizing transportation policy and fostering innovation while prioritizing safety and accessibility.

Tesla designs and manufactures electric vehicles, battery systems, and advanced autonomous driving technology. We are a proud American manufacturer with over 100,000 U.S. employees, and we build everything in-house to make advanced, affordable products at scale. Tesla is working to ensure that AV technology is developed and built in the U.S. and deployed globally.

Safety is Fundamental

Tesla believes that autonomous driving technology is the future, and we work every day to lead the transition to safer, sustainable, and affordable transportation. The U.S. is experiencing what the Department of Transportation has described as a "national crisis" in motor vehicle safety -- 40,000 people die on U.S. roads every year.¹ At Tesla, our vision is a future where AVs eliminate human error altogether.

Our Full Self-Driving (FSD) Supervised system, a Level 2 advanced driver-assistance system, already demonstrates a seven-fold improvement in crash prevention compared to the U.S. average.² Independent data backs this: vehicle insurer Lemonade recently slashed rates for Tesla drivers by 50% for miles driven with our FSD (Supervised) system engaged due to proven risk reduction.³

With FSD (Supervised) data as the foundation of our training technology for our Level 4 fully autonomous operations, we can achieve a greater level of roadway safety. AVs promise a technology that can eliminate collisions, injuries and fatalities associated with high-risk human behavior such as impaired, distracted, and drowsy driving. Our teams work tirelessly to address this epidemic by developing our automated driving systems and designing the safest vehicles from the ground up.

Economic Growth and Job Creation

S.B. 909 positions Maryland to lead in the AV-driven economy. Research shows AV adoption could create three million new U.S. jobs by 2035, including roles in manufacturing, maintenance, and software development, reduce delivery and consumer costs, and boost annual earnings for the average worker. In fact, studies indicate that the workforce needed to produce and maintain AVs could reach almost half a million, which would provide incredible job opportunity to Americans with varied backgrounds and experiences. Tesla, with over 100,000 U.S. employees, builds AV technology in-house to scale production and create high-quality jobs.⁴

¹ NHTSA Estimates 39,345 Traffic Fatalities in 2024, NHTSA (Apr. 8, 2025), <https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/nhtsa-estimates-39345-traffic-fatalities-2024>.

² Vehicle Safety Report, Tesla, <https://www.tesla.com/fsd/safety>.

³ See Abhirup Roy, *Lemonade to cut insurance rates for Tesla drivers in endorsement of EV maker's software technology*, Reuters (Jan. 21, 2026), <https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/lemonade-halve-tesla-insurance-rates-miles-driven-with-software-assistant-2026-01-21/>.

⁴ See *Securing America's Future Energy, America's Workforce and the Self-Driving Future 9* (2018), https://avworkforce.secureenergy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/SAFE_AV_Policy_Brief.pdf; see also *Opportunity AV: How Many and What Types of Jobs Will Be Created by Autonomous Vehicles?*, Chamber of Progress (Mar. 2023), <https://progresschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Opportunity-AV-How-Many-and-What-Type-of->

Accessibility and Equity

At Tesla, we believe AVs will create an autonomous future that is accessible to everyone. For example, vehicles used in our autonomous driving service, Robotaxi, are designed to support various accessibility needs, including room for service animals, screen readers, app-based verbal location assistance, and information available in 29 languages. We are relentlessly innovating and iterating to expand mobility, independence, and access to opportunity for all. By removing barriers to mobility, AVs will empower underserved communities, including the disabled, rural residents and aging populations.

Data Privacy and Accountability

Tesla supports transparency in data collection and complies with strict privacy standards to safeguard personal information. We support consumer choice by allowing customers to elect when -- and how -- their data is used. In light of the bill's inclusion of vehicle data in Maryland's Online Data Privacy Act (MODPA), Tesla respectfully suggests two refinements: (1) personal information collected exclusively for safety events such as crash diagnostics should be carved out from MODPA applicability; and (2) personal information that remains on vehicle only (not centrally stored or uploaded) should also be exempt as this data cannot be used for any broader commercial profiling or tracking.

Proportionality of Enforcement Mechanisms

Tesla respectfully requests removal of §21-1510, which would revoke licensure to sell vehicles directly to consumers for violations of the AV subtitle. This provision disproportionately targets Tesla's business model as we are the leader in the direct-to-consumer model. S.B. 909 should ensure fair and impartial enforcement for all AV companies and should focus on correcting safety and compliance failures, rather than imposing heavy-handed, punitive measures that do nothing to enhance roadway safety.

Closing

At Tesla we believe AVs will substantially increase safety and accessibility along with spurring new economic activity. We stand ready to partner with the Committee to ensure safer roads, expanded mobility, and economic growth for the people of Maryland. With 34 states already allowing AV testing or deployment, Maryland has the opportunity to lead in this transformative technology.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S.B. 909.

Submitted by:
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