<Insert Letterhead>

<Insert Date>

Assemblymember David Chiu

State Capitol, Room 4112

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for AB 550 (Chiu) – The Safe Streets and Work Zones Act of 2021**

Dear Assemblymember Chiu,

<Association/Organization name> writes in strong support of Assembly Bill 550 – The Safe Streets and Work Zones Act of 2021. AB 550 protects the safety of vulnerable travelers and workers on California roads by giving local transportation authorities and the state the option of creating speed safety pilot programs informed by a stakeholder-driven process under the auspices of the Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA). This urgent measure is desperately needed to stem the tide of traffic violence in the state and protect drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and workers traveling on our roadways.

Every year for the past five years, over 1,000 Californians have died in speed-related traffic collisions. Tens of thousands more have been injured. Nationwide, 112,580 people were killed in speeding-related incidents from 2005 to 2014. Moreover, despite the pandemic and related drop in driving, deaths from traffic incidents actually rose 8 percent from 2019 to 2020.

Many jurisdictions have adopted Vision Zero policies in an effort to bring traffic fatalities to exactly that – *zero*. Traffic safety initiatives underway in these localities have made some progress, but these efforts to date have not brought about the necessary reductions in injuries and deaths. Jurisdictions are desperate for additional tools to combat speeding and protect the public from these preventable injuries and deaths.

Speeding is incredibly dangerous – it is the number one factor in crash severity. If a driver traveling at 20 miles per hour hits a pedestrian, there is a 90 percent chance that pedestrian will survive. At 40 mph, the chance of survival drops to 20 percent. That means eight out of ten people hit by a car going 40 mph or higher will die from their injuries.

Numerous empirical studies show that speed safety systems reduce speeding, crashes, injuries, and fatalities. In New York City, total crashes declined 15 percent, injuries from crashes declined 17 percent, fatalities dropped 55 percent, and excessive speeding violations dropped by 60 percent. In Portland, OR, speeding fatalities have been reduced 53 percent since their speed safety program started. And in Denver, CO the number of drivers exceeding the speed limit by 10 miles per hour or more decreased by 21 percent.

Despite an established history and proven track record, California law currently prohibits the use of these systems. AB 550 directs the Secretary of CalSTA to bring together a stakeholder working group to establish program guidelines for the piloting of two speed safety programs: one on dangerous local streets, and the other in active state or local work zones.

This bill sets out a collaborative model based on stakeholder input and community engagement, not a top-down mandate. AB 550 includes clear guardrails to protect people’s privacy, and citations under any pilot program will be civil in nature – not criminal – and will not result in a point on a driver’s record. The total fine amount, including fees, is capped at a maximum of $125, and jurisdictions may set the fine lower if they wish. Best practices from other programs demonstrate that these systems are still effective even if fines are lower than traditional speeding violations, which can be several hundred dollars. Jurisdictions must also offer diversion options for low-income drivers unable to pay the full fine.

Traditional police enforcement of traffic laws has frequently put drivers of color at risk from implicit and explicit bias. Recent studies have shown that Black drivers in California are stopped by police at 2.5 times the rate of whites and are searched three times as often. In some cities, the disparity is even more pronounced. This bill proposes an alternative, administrative-based model for speed detection that will protect public safety while being responsive to community needs. California must provide communities with the option to pilot this public safety tool in order to create the expectation of regular speed checking on the most dangerous streets, and in work zones where traffic work crews are in dangerous proximity to fast-moving vehicles.

<insert brief summary about the organization and how this bill relates to your organization>.

We must remember those whom we have lost, but also take action to protect people we know we can save. AB 550 will prevent future deaths on our streets. For these reasons, <Association/Organization> is pleased to support AB 550.

Sincerely,

Name

Title