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**Testimony of Montana Williams
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Chamber of Progress**

**New York City Department of Transportation
Proposed Autonomous Vehicle Amendments to DOT Traffic Rules**

My name is Montana Williams and I am the Director of State and Local Public Policy for the Chamber of Progress, a new center-left tech industry coalition promoting technology's progressive future.

Our organization works to ensure that all Americans benefit from technological leaps, and our commitment to a progressive society, economy, and workforce sets us apart from other business groups. For example, we strongly support federal legislation to promote voting rights; support President Biden's proposed corporate tax increase to fund infrastructure investments; and back a national emissions reduction target of 50% by 2030. Our corporate partners include autonomous vehicle companies like Cruise, Nuro, Waymo, and Zoox, but our partners do not have a vote on or veto over our positions.

I want to leave you with a simple message today: Autonomous vehicles have the potential to make New York a safer, more convenient, and more equitable place to live -- but only if New York takes a smart approach to AV regulation.

First, autonomous vehicles will help close the food gap. All New Yorkers should have access to healthy, affordable food options in their neighborhoods, but this isn't the case in many areas like South Bronx, parts of Brooklyn, and Harlem. Residents in low-income and predominantly minority areas continue to be plagued by the food desert crisis and are forced to travel far away to get to grocery stores only to bring home carryable items that fit in their handheld bags, or rely on expensive bodegas and corner stores with limited produce. AV companies like Nuro aim to deliver groceries and food via low-speed, seatless, passengerless autonomous vehicles. This would give New York City residents that live outside food-rich areas the same convenient and affordable access to fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, or meat they need to live happily and healthily. Mandating a human operator in these vehicles would completely eliminate these delivery services, and New Yorkers in need would miss out on these essential benefits.

Second, autonomous vehicles will help close the accessibility gap. In 2017, the US Census Bureau reported 930,000 people living with disabilities in New York City. Of that number, only 41% of working age people with disabilities were in the labor force, largely due to the lack of affordable and

easily accessible transportation. Though public transit is available, it is harder for those with disabilities to navigate by bus or train in times of inclement weather, in times when an accessible stop is shut down, or when there is no room for their equipment on a busy day. For the blind and other people living with disabilities, safe autonomous vehicles can't arrive fast enough.

Third, autonomous vehicles will bring safer streets and reduce the number of accidents. In 2020, at least 243 people died in traffic related incidents in New York City. Research shows that at least 90% of car crashes are caused by human error, and studies suggest that putting AVs on the road now could save hundreds of thousands of lives over the long term. By eliminating cases of distracted drivers, drivers under the influence, or geographically lost drivers, AVs can reduce the number of pedestrian and bike fatalities that occur in the city daily. For example, autonomous vehicle companies have created simulation programs to create biker friendly software, and sensors on their vehicles in order to detect and safely operate around vulnerable road users.

Finally, autonomous vehicles will spur new jobs in New York City. The Federal Department of Transportation reported earlier this year that the use of automation systems would create jobs in the transportation and logistics industries, and other business sectors. The US Department of Labor and its state partners have created job transition and retraining programs to assist those affected by the introduction of autonomy. These entities help drivers adapt to new technologies and market conditions, helping them find gainful employment. Driverless vehicles would also cut down the amount of turnover the trucking industry faces as most drivers are of retirement age or close to it. By utilizing these driverless vehicles, involuntary job losses would be reduced.

With the tremendous potential of autonomous vehicles to make New York City a safer and more equitable city, it is so important to test, improve, and deploy autonomous vehicles without delay.

We share your concerns and commitment to keeping New Yorkers' safety and wellbeing top of mind. But implementing these proposed duplicative and contradictory regulations -- when state regulations of AVs exist -- would unnecessarily prolong the future promise of autonomous vehicles for New York City. New York state law already makes clear that autonomous vehicles will not be tested or widely deployed in the state until and unless vehicles have been certified as safe and reliable.

New York City has always been a place of creativity and innovation, but these rules would make New York one of the least hospitable cities in the U.S. for future autonomous vehicle development. For the sake of supporting those with disabilities, addressing food deserts, and reducing traffic deaths, we encourage you to reject these additional hurdles to New York's autonomous vehicle future.

Thank you.