



March 1, 2023

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**SB 685: Autonomous Vehicle Converters – Sale of Autonomous Vehicles
Position: Favorable with Amendments**

Dear Chair Smith:

On behalf of the Alliance for Automotive Innovation (Auto Innovators), we are writing to express our position on SB 685 and request an amendment to clarify liability requirements for manufacturers.

From the manufacturers producing most vehicles sold in the U.S. to autonomous vehicle (AV) innovators to equipment suppliers, battery producers and semiconductor makers – the Alliance for Automotive Innovation represents the full auto industry, a sector supporting 10 million American jobs and five percent of the economy.

As a global leader in the development of AV technologies, the U.S. is at the forefront of innovations that will transform transportation in a number of ways. Safety, of course, is a critical component in the development of AVs. Another benefit of these vehicles is the promise to provide life-changing opportunities for those who are not adequately served by existing mobility options, such as seniors, persons with disabilities, and those who require more affordable transportation.

While we appreciate the intent of SB 685, the bill is missing liability protections for vehicle manufacturers. As the bill defines them, AV converters fundamentally alter the original manufacturer’s product by “addition, substitution, or removal of components”. Manufacturers certify that their vehicles comply with federal motor vehicle safety standards. When fundamental vehicle components are added, substituted, or removed by a third-party the liability for those changes should rest with the third-party responsible for those changes. To clarify this issue, we have provided language which we think addresses this concern.

Proposed Amendment Language

“The manufacturer of a vehicle converted by an autonomous vehicle converter into an converted autonomous vehicle is not liable in, and shall have a defense to and be dismissed from, any legal action brought against the manufacturer by any person injured due to an alleged vehicle defect caused by the autonomous vehicle converter's conversion of the vehicle, or by equipment installed by the autonomous vehicle converter, unless the alleged defect was present in the vehicle as originally manufactured.”

Thank you for your consideration of the Auto Innovators’ position. For more information, please contact our local representative, Bill Kress, at (410) 375-8548.

Sincerely,



Josh Fisher
Senior Director, State Affairs