

Testimony of Chief Derek Barrs
Nominee for Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
Before the United States Senate
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
July 16, 2025

Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as the President's nominee for Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). I am honored by the trust placed in me by President Trump and Secretary Duffy to serve in this critical safety role.

I would like to thank my family, friends, and colleagues for their unwavering support. I am especially grateful to my parents for their lifelong encouragement. I wish my mother could be here today, but I know she is watching proudly from heaven.

The trucking industry touches all our lives. Commercial drivers transport over **70%** of our nation's freight and share the road with us every day. These professionals are the backbone of our economy, working long hours—often away from their families—to ensure we have the goods we rely on. I deeply respect their dedication and understand the delicate balance between enhancing safety and enabling efficient freight movement. I salute and value the American truck driver and thank them for their work.

I'm a multi-generational Floridian, raised in rural Madison County, located in North Florida. That upbringing instilled in me the values of faith, family, community, responsibility, and service.

My journey in public service began as a teenager with the Madison County, -Sheriff's Office, driven by a deep desire to serve my community. I'm incredibly grateful to the many individuals who have invested in me over the years, whose guidance shaped my path and strengthened my commitment to service. That commitment has led to a 34-year career spanning both the public and private sectors, with nearly 25 years dedicated to commercial motor vehicle safety. I retired as Chief of the Florida Highway Patrol in 2020, but the experiences and lessons learned from my decades spent in law enforcement continue to be a cornerstone of my life.

Today, I remain committed to serving my community through my appointment to the Flagler County School Board where we operate a successful commercial vehicle driver

training school, contributing to workforce development, and helping prepare the next generation of safe and professional drivers.

I have witnessed the devastating aftermath of crashes—stood beside first responders, comforted grieving families, and seen how a single moment can ripple through entire communities. In 2023, approximately 5,730 lives were lost in large truck and bus crashes including around 900 commercial drivers. These are not just statistics—they are parents, children, colleagues, and friends. Every life lost is one too many.

No one should have to see the horrific aftermath of a crash like what I and so many first responders have seen. No family should have to endure that kind of loss. If confirmed, I will make roadway safety my highest priority.

My work has always emphasized open communication and collaboration—with industry, law enforcement, and safety organizations. I understand that FMCSA's actions impact an entire industry, and I am committed to ensuring that agency decisions are informed, balanced, and transparent. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen relationships between government and stakeholders, working together on our shared goal of improving roadway safety, as well as addressing critical safety issues.

During my time with the Florida Highway Patrol, I served as the FMCSA lead for the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP), where our troopers worked diligently to make a positive difference on our roadways. Through this work, I witnessed the importance of strong partnerships to advance safety.

At the national level, I served as the chairman of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's Enforcement and Industry Modernization Committee and President of the Transportation Industry membership. There, I helped advance initiatives in connected and automated vehicle technologies, data sharing, and cross-jurisdictional collaboration.

I am grateful for the dedicated FMCSA employees who work tirelessly to improve commercial vehicle safety. If confirmed, I would be honored to lead this team in fulfilling the FMCSA mission to reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks and buses. I will ensure the agency operates with integrity, transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your teams to advance our shared goals of roadway safety and the efficient transportation of goods. From President Roosevelt, "I am ready to be the Man in the Arena." I am prepared to get to work and welcome your questions.