



1550 Crystal Drive
Suite 804
Arlington, VA 22202
T 202.244.4700
F 202.966.4818

December 7, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair, Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Senator Cantwell,

The phenomena of social media addiction are not only linked to deaths from mental health disorders but also deadly road incidents caused by drivers distracted by social media on their mobile phones. The leaders of social media platforms such as Instagram, Meta (formerly known as Facebook), Twitter, Tik Tok, etc. knowingly craft algorithms that trigger addictive responses for immediate use of their products. This could be in the middle of class, during a family meal, or, most dangerously, behind the wheel of a vehicle.

The safety of National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) members' frontline workers, along with hundreds of other roadside occupations, are at the mercy of drivers. In 2019, waste collection was the sixth deadliest profession, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Although our efforts to reduce fatalities, injuries and accidents are making a difference, legislation combating addictive products is what is needed to make a beneficial impact for our workers and America's drivers.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law No: 117-58) mandates new passenger vehicles have drunk driving/impaired driving prevention technology. We applaud Congress for making this directive but believe the same should be done for distracted driving prevention technology. Such technology is not theoretical. Apple applied for a patent in 2008 and was granted one in 2014 for technology that limits iPhone usage by the individual in the driver's seat of a vehicle. In its application, Apple noted the danger these devices present relative to distracted driving. In Apple's new operating software, iOS 15, the "Driving Focus" mode silences/limits text messages, calls, and other notifications when you turn it on. Social Media companies must work with phone developers, and car manufactures to make such technology the default setting for drivers in new cars.

We look forward to cooperating with you to protect the American people from the unreasonable harm caused by the addictive nature of social media. Implementing safe driving prevention technology in new cars is the indispensable solution that our industry, many like it, and American drivers need to travel roads safely.

NWRA represents the private sector waste and recycling industry. It is estimated that the private sector waste and recycling industry accounts for more than one million jobs and generates nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars in U.S. GDP. Our members operate in all 50 states and the

District of Columbia. Waste and recycling facilities number nearly 18,000 scattered throughout the U.S., mirroring population centers. Our nearly 700 members are a mix of publicly traded and privately owned local, regional, and Fortune 500 national and international companies. The solid waste industry directly employs nearly 453,000 people as of September 2021.

Thank you for your time and dedication. We would welcome the opportunity to meet and further discuss how to protect our industry's frontline vulnerable road users and other drivers in the United States. For more information on NWRA's stance on this issue, please contact Jonathan Taylor, Director of Government & Political Affairs, at jtaylor@wasterecycling.org. My contact information is dsmith@wasterecycling.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Darrell K. Smith". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Darrell K. Smith, PhD
President and CEO
National Waste & Recycling Association