

**STATEMENT OF JENNIFER MOONEY TIERNEY,
KERNERSVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA
DAUGHTER OF JAMES WILLIAMS MOONEY, Sr.
KILLED IN A TRUCK CRASH
June 23, 2008**

The course of my life changed drastically one night 25 years ago, when my father, James William Mooney, was killed in a senseless, preventable crash with a big rig truck on a country road in North Carolina. I am here today because I don't want others to experience the type of loss that I have. Unfortunately, our legislature is pushing forward a bill that might do just that. Senate Bill 1695 is being rushed through the legislature at lightening speed, and I am here to urge our legislature to put the brakes on it. If passed, S 1695 will lead to more truck crash-related deaths, more debilitating injuries, and more roadway damage and destruction. A short term gain for the economic agenda of the trucking industry will result in long term pain for North Carolina families.

This bill would allow longer trucks, wider boats and some heavier farm commodity trucks on North Carolina roads. It will also allow 53-foot-long tractor trailers on approximately 20 thousand miles or approximately 90 percent of highways where 48 feet is the current limit. Many studies, including one by ITRE NC State University, have concluded that putting 53-foot-long trucks on these almost entirely narrow, two-lane, two-way roads would substantially increase the chances of more large truck crashes on these roads.

At a time when more than one thousand five hundred people are being killed annually in highway crashes in North Carolina, and one of every seven fatalities is the result of large truck crashes, I ask why is our legislature taking steps to further endanger us all instead of taking swift measures to improve safety? We have been forced to endure 1,100 truck crash deaths since 2001. That is equivalent to 100 plane crashes in North Carolina or half the student population of Broughton High School. Instead of trying to do something to bring down deaths and injuries, our Senate pushed forward a dangerous and deadly agenda of the trucking industry.

I might not attend political fundraisers or go to receptions with state lawmakers, but I ask our legislators today, is a \$1,000 campaign contribution from the North Carolina Trucking Association really worth a mom or dad burying their teenager who is killed in a truck crash with an overweight truck, or innocent families killed because of a horrific bridge collapse like last summer's tragedy in Minneapolis, or a school bus filled with our children run off the road because an oversized rig came across the double yellow line and was too big to stay in the lane? The North Carolina Legislature needs to put the safety of families first.

Before this bill should even be considered, the Department of Transportation (DOT) should set criteria and evaluate each highway to determine whether larger trucks could safely be driven on them. Additionally, the DOT should take measures to ensure that our infrastructure will not be further destroyed by larger trucks. Instead this bill strips DOT (and local governments) authority to determine which of these roads will not be safe. The duty to do make that determination would fall to a The Joint Legislative Transportation

Oversight Committee which is headed by Sen. Clark Jenkins, the sponsor of the bill. Right now, more than 1,000 bridges are being overstressed and left unprotected because they are used by extra heavy trucks. Thirty-four (34) percent of – that's one of every three -- of North Carolina's roads are in poor or mediocre condition. And, according to the North Carolina Department of Transportation, heavy trucks are costing North Carolina taxpayers at least \$130 million each year and probably more in road and bridge destruction.

If Senate Bill 1695 becomes law, North Carolina families will pay with their lives and their wallets. Don't let the proverbial cart come before the horse. Please slow down the process of rushing S 1695 through and allow for common sense to rule. I urge our legislature to listen to the concerns of the highway patrol, DOT and ITRE North Carolina State University. It is essential that legislators read their studies and analysis and watch the video done by DOT on these very roads before they make the decision to risk the lives of their constituents. Our legislature should move forward judiciously and safely for all North Carolinians.