Letter from Representative Ferrante Regarding H3422

Dear Members of the Autonomous Vehicles Working Group:

As the sponsor of H3422, An Act relative to the safety of autonomous vehicles, I write in support of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Autonomous Vehicles Working Group.

Technology is rapidly changing. In order to stay competitive as a state in the autonomous vehicle industry, we must be in the forefront of this industry.

Autonomous cars are no longer just another potential innovation waiting somewhere in the distant future. Autonomous vehicles have arrived and are currently being tested on the road in other states.

Clearly, Massachusetts needs a framework to make sure that there is both safety and accountability in relation to this fast expanding industry. Trying to regulate this industry on a case by case basis, by requiring Memorandums of Understanding from each participant appears burdensome, time consuming and impractical.

My recommendation to the working group is for the Massachusetts Legislature to create a legal framework that encourages and promotes innovation while ensuring safety for our citizens. This legislation should allow companies to test vehicles, deploy autonomous vehicles in a safe and controlled manner, and to develop and refine technology with public safety as the top priority. It should also set forth guide lines for state and local law enforcement, which currently do not exist and are outside the scope of a MOU.

Legislation of this nature will also foster competition in the industry which is good for the economy and for the success of this new field. Since working with this industry, it has become clear that autonomous vehicles are an economic driver for many of the technology companies here in Massachusetts. The amount of investment from this industry has the potential to create a substantial amount of new jobs here in Massachusetts and to help us retain our status as a “Tech Hub”.

However, if the regulations are not uniform and each participant is required to negotiate a separate and unique MOU separate apart from instruction for local and public safety enforcement officials, the process may leave us in a competitive disadvantage to those states that have streamlined their regulatory process.

I encourage you to consider H3422 as a conversation starter.

This is the time to begin creating a framework for autonomous vehicle development and deployment; prior to the deployment of self-driving cars on public roads. This new technology has great potential and we need to promote its development in a safe and responsible way.

Sincerely,
Ann-Margaret Ferrante