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Douglas Ito, Director
Consumer Protection and Enforcement Division
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3214

Dear Director Ito:

The National Federation of the Blind of California supports the Driverless Deployment permit application submitted to the California Public Utilities Commission by Cruise. As the transformative membership and advocacy organization of the state's blind, the National Federation of the Blind of California is committed to advocating for the right of blind Californians to travel independently. If the California Public Utilities Commission approves the wide-scale commercial use of Cruise's autonomous vehicles, we believe this would provide accessibility and independence for many blind people in the region and expanding throughout the state. We also believe that there should be a healthy set of choices as more entrants to this market emerge.

At the national level, the National Federation of the Blind was founded in 1940 to advocate for the complete integration of the blind into society on the basis of equality. Today the national organization has more than fifty thousand members from fifty-two affiliates all across the country. If the California Public Utilities Commission approves Cruise's application, we have no doubt the Federation would help advocate for the proliferation of autonomous vehicle testing nationwide, with the state of California leading the way. National Federation of the Blind President, Mark Riccobono, once said in an address at the US Department of Transportation: "Equal access to reliable, affordable, flexible, and barrier-free transportation is one of the most significant obstacles preventing people with disabilities . . . from fully contributing their talents and achieving full integration in our communities. The race to bring fully autonomous vehicles to America's roads brings an unprecedented opportunity to ensure equal access for people with disabilities."

Cruise's autonomous ride-hailing service has the potential to improve independence and create new mobility options for people who cannot drive due to having a disability. These new options can increase access for blind Americans to be able to commute to and from work, school, the doctor's office, the grocery store, or anywhere else.

To offer these solutions to California residents, the California Public Utilities Commission should encourage and allow Cruise's autonomous vehicle service by approving the Cruise application, which will allow for accessible and regulated deployment of autonomous vehicles on our streets.

Sincerely,

Tim Elder

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