

December 9, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy,

As Congress continues the process of developing the next COVID-19 relief package, it is critical that you include emergency relief funding for our nation's maritime transportation system. The maritime industry has encountered significant hardships, and Congress must take immediate steps to ensure that the whole of the maritime transportation system has the resources necessary to address the unique and unexpected challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our maritime transportation system and the critical workers employed throughout this system have kept vital goods moving to medical professionals and first responders, have ensured that our Nation's shelves remain stocked, and have enabled commerce to continue flowing during these uncertain times. Ports that are located in rural areas have propped up local economies, providing critical public services while providing assistance to small businesses, oftentimes at the ports' own expense. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, over 650,000 Americans were directly employed in jobs generated through the movement of marine cargo and through vessel activity while 30.8 million total jobs were supported by cargo moving through America's deep-draft ports.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis has had a significantly negative impact on the maritime industry. Commercial cargo has plummeted – total waterborne trade volume is down 6.3% compared to last year, while the value of this trade has crashed by 13.9% totaling \$200 billion. Passenger movements remain virtually ceased. And expenses have greatly increased due to COVID-19 protocols and precautions that we have implemented nationwide. With an uncertain outlook, these trends are likely to continue and intensify as the COVID-19 pandemic peaks over the coming months. To date, no dedicated funding has been provided in any of the COVID-19 legislation to assist the maritime transportation system, despite emergency relief being provided to other modes of transportation.

As you consider additional actions to respond to the ongoing pandemic, we urge you to provide \$3.5 billion for the maritime transportation sector. Should the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2021 be enacted in advance of further COVID-19 relief, Congress could direct these funds through the Maritime Transportation System Emergency Relief Program which would authorize the Maritime Administration to provide grants

to help defray business-critical expenses that we have incurred due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

It is essential that the U.S. maritime industry maintain a state of readiness and sustain our critical responsibility in the supply chains that provide food, medical equipment, and other essential goods for the citizens of this country. Without assistance from Congress to cover our pressing needs, we fear that we may not be able to continue operations at the high level that Americans have come to depend on. We hope that you can provide this critical emergency relief to the maritime industry as the next COVID-19 relief bill moves through Congress.

Sincerely,

American Association of Port Authorities
American Great Lakes Ports Association
American Waterways Operators
California Association of Port Authorities
Dredging Contractors of America
Gulf Ports Association
Florida Ports Council
International Longshore and Warehouse Union
International Longshoremen's Association
International Propeller Club of the United States
Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO
National Association of Waterfront Employers
Navy League of the United States
Oregon Public Ports Association (OPPA)
Passenger Vessel Association
Ports Association of Louisiana
Transportation Trades Department., AFL-CIO
USA Maritime
Waterways Council, Inc.
World Trade Center of New Orleans