C. James Patti
Chairman

USAMaritime

July 2. 2021

The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio:

I am writing on behalf of USA Maritime to request your support for two legislative proposals that would help strengthen the U.S.-flag fleet and provide job opportunities for licensed and unlicensed American merchant mariners. USA Maritime is a Coalition whose membership includes shipping companies operating U.S.-flag vessels in our nation's foreign trade, the maritime labor unions representing the licensed and unlicensed men and women who crew these vessels, and their related maritime associations.

First, we would ask that you consider including cargo preference requirements in any future infrastructure programs enacted into law. For example, the Biden Administration's American Jobs Plan represents a significant investment in infrastructure across the United States. By adding U.S.-flag cargo preference shipping requirements to the Plan Congress will ensure that cargoes shipped for the infrastructure programs authorized and funded through the American Jobs Plan will be carried by American ships with American crews. As such the program would not only rebuild America's critical infrastructure, it would also ensure that American taxpayer dollars benefit working families and their communities by providing cargo to U.S.-flag vessels and jobs to U.S. citizen mariners.

Second, we would ask that you consider reversing the disastrous reductions in cargo preference that were enacted during the 112th Congress. Those reductions had a catastrophic impact on the U.S.-Flag internationally sailing fleet. In the years following the enactment of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), the U.S.-flag international fleet saw a reduction in size of over 25%. The commensurate loss of jobs was significant, and the impact on American national security and readiness has been serious. Further, MAP-21 overturned a longstanding compromise among the agricultural, aid, and maritime stakeholders which provided for MARAD reimbursement of certain cargo preference related costs, thereby ensuring that the increased U.S.-flag cargo preference shipping requirements will enhance commercial sealift readiness without negative consequences to international aid programs. By repealing the changes made by MAP-21, and potentially increasing cargo preference requirements to 100%, Congress can undo the damage caused by MAP-21 while working to strengthen and expand the U.S.-flag international fleet.

We look forward to working with you and your staff on these and other proposals designed to strengthen and expand that United States-flag merchant marine.

As always, we greatly appreciate your support for our industry and your efforts to reverse and halt the outsourcing of American maritime jobs. If you have any questions or would like any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

C. James Patti, Chairman
USA Maritime

cc: The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Honorable Salud Carbajal, Chairman, Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation
The Honorable Bob Gibbs, Ranking, Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation