

May 29, 2020

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio  
Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
2134 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
2164 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sean Patrick Maloney  
Chairman  
U.S. House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and  
Maritime Transportation  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Gibbs  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and  
Maritime Transportation  
505 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: COVID-19 Port Relief**

Dear Chairman DeFazio, Chairman Maloney, Ranking Member Graves, and Ranking Member Gibbs,

As Congress works to help those impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, immediate steps must be taken to ensure that our nation's ports have the resources and assistance necessary to manage the unprecedented challenges posed by this crisis.

Americans have been able to practice social isolation in large part due to the continued functioning of our nation's supply chains – in which these ports play a critical role. Ports keep vital goods moving to medical professionals and first responders, ensure that our nation's shelves remain stocked, and make sure that commerce continues to flow.

However, our nation's ports have been significantly impacted by the economic downturn resulting from this pandemic and face unique challenges. While managing increased costs to secure the supplies and labor necessary to ensure proper sanitization of their facilities, ports have seen containerized cargo, bulk cargo, and break bulk cargos decline 15 to 25 percent over prior year levels, while roll on/roll off cargos have seen reductions of up to 90%. Meanwhile, the port tourism industry has completely shuttered. Ports located in rural areas, where they often serve as the key economic driver, have seen similar declines in revenue, which in some cases threaten their very existence.<sup>1</sup>

We are beginning to see furloughs and layoffs in the maritime industry and supply chain, and it is estimated that a 20 percent reduction in cargo throughput at our nation's ports could result in the direct loss of 130,000 jobs.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Selected U.S. containerport survey results and anecdotal evidence derived from AAPA U.S. member port outreach, May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> John C. Martin Associates, LLC

**Accordingly, we request that Congress include economic relief to our nation's public ports in any future coronavirus response or recovery proposal. This relief is crucial to support port workers and the U.S. port industry as it responds to and recovers from this crisis.**

These funds would enable ports to maintain their workforces, withstand lost revenue and economic shocks caused by the coronavirus pandemic and manage increased costs of operation resulting from this crisis. This relief is critical to ports ailing as a result of this pandemic.

In a recent letter to House leadership, 85 Members of Congress voiced support for port relief. In the letter, signers note that *"it is critical that all of our nation's ports receive much needed assistance to keep supply chains moving and keep both employees and customers safe."*

We agree, and believe that ports of all sizes should be able to access the resources necessary to ensure that ports and our maritime supply chain remain intact and able to facilitate the coming economic recovery. These ports are economic engines of their communities and will be key in getting the U.S. economy back on track, a fact true for ports of all sizes across the United States.

While we applaud Congressional efforts to provide aid and assistance to businesses and workers ailing due to the coronavirus pandemic, we note with concern that relief for America's ports has not yet been included in any proposals to date.

We thank you for your consideration of this letter. Our nation's ports and maritime industry stand ready to help our nation recover from this pandemic.

Respectfully,

American Association of Port Authorities

American Great Lakes Ports Association

Oregon Public Ports Association

Florida Ports Council

Pacific Northwest Waterways Association

North Atlantic Ports Association, Inc.

California Association of Port Authorities

Texas Ports Association

Gulf Ports Association

Ports Association of Louisiana