

June 15, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker:

As the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation considers S.2016, the Surface Transportation Investment Act, the more than 120 undersigned organizations write to express strong support for Amendment Young_1, offered by Senators Young, Tester, Sinema, Blackburn, Blunt, Capito, Cruz, Moran, Scott, and Lummis, which includes the text of the bipartisan DRIVE Safe Act (S.659). The amendment will address the nation's growing truck driver shortage by promoting opportunity and enhanced safety training for emerging members of the transportation workforce, and we urge the amendment's inclusion in the forthcoming safety title.

Although 49 states and the District of Columbia currently allow individuals under the age of 21 to obtain a commercial driver's license and operate in intrastate commerce, these same individuals are prohibited from driving a truck across state lines until they turn 21. The DRIVE Safe Act would change this through a rigorous two-step apprenticeship program that creates a path for these drivers to enter the industry. As the name implies, however, the legislation's first priority is safety. In order to qualify, candidates must complete at least 400 hours of additional training—more than what is required for any other CDL holder in the nation at this time. Only once these benchmarks are successfully met will the candidate be permitted to cross state lines.

As a testament to the safety considerations underpinning the DRIVE Safe Act, all qualified drivers who participate in the apprenticeship program established by the bill would only be allowed to drive trucks outfitted with the latest safety technology, including active braking collision mitigation systems, forward-facing event recording cameras, speed limiters set at 65 miles per hour or less, and automatic or automatic manual transmissions. Professional drivers training within the program are also required to be accompanied by an experienced driver throughout the process. Furthermore, the DRIVE Safe Act would incentivize the increased adoption of vehicle safety technologies across trucking fleets by allowing motor carriers to access a broader pool of labor in exchange for additional investments in safety.

Seventy percent of the nation's freight is carried by commercial trucks, and, while demand is projected to increase over the next decade, the threat posed by the driver shortage stands to disrupt the continuity of the supply chain. This is especially problematic as the nation and our economy recover from the tremendous impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a recent estimate, the trucking industry needs an additional 60,800 truck drivers immediately—a deficit that is expected to grow to more than 160,000 by 2028. In fact, when anticipated driver retirement numbers are combined with the expected growth in capacity, the trucking industry will need to hire roughly 1.1 million new drivers over the next decade, or an average of nearly 110,000 per year. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the truck driver shortage, and the temporary closures of state DMVs and truck driver training schools dried up the already fragile pipeline of new drivers entering the

trucking industry. And as a result of the already-crippling driver shortage, companies in supply chains across the economy are facing higher transportation costs, leading to increased prices for consumers on everything from electronics to food.

The DRIVE Safe Act will help our nation's freight continue to move while preserving and enhancing the safety of our highway system. It will help to fill desperately-needed jobs and provide younger Americans with the opportunity to enter a profession with a median salary of \$54,585, plus health and retirement benefits. With the training regimen established by the bill, these will be some of the most highly skilled drivers on the road. They will receive training in addition to what is required today. Between the advanced safety equipment requirements and extensive training, the DRIVE Safe Act would advance the cause of improved truck safety for the next generation of drivers and the public more than any other recent action by Congress.

Thank you for your attention and thoughtful consideration of this important and timely amendment. We look forward to working with you to include the DRIVE Safe Act as an amendment to S.2016, the Surface Transportation Investment Act.

Sincerely,

Agricultural and Food Transporters Conference
Agricultural Retailers Association
Amcot
American Apparel & Footwear Association
American Bakers Association
American Beverage Association
American Chemistry Council
American Coatings Association
American Feed Industry Association
American Forest and Paper Association
American Foundry Society
American Frozen Food Institute
American Supply Association
American Trucking Associations
AmericanHort
Arkansas Beverage Association
Associated Equipment Distributors
Association for Hose and Accessories Distribution
Auto Care Association
Beverage Association of Tennessee
Brick Industry Association
Coalition of Franchisee Associations
Colorado Beverage Association
Commercial Vehicle Training Association
Consumer Brands Association
Convenience Distribution Association
Cotton Growers Warehouse Association
Energy Marketers of America
Equipment Service Association
FedEx

Florida Beverage Association
Fluid Power Distributors Association
FMI – The Food Industry Association
Foodservice Equipment Distributors Association
Forest Resources Association
Franchise Business Services
Gases and Welding Distributors Association
Georgia Beverage Association
Hardwood Federation
Heating, Air-Conditioning, & Refrigeration Distributors International
Home Depot
Hoosier Beverage Association
Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils
Intermodal Association of North America
Intermodal Motor Carriers Conference
International Association of Plastics Distribution
International Bottled Water Association
International Dairy Foods Association
International Foodservice Distributors Association
International Sealing Distribution Association
International Warehouse Logistics Association
Maine Beverage Association
Metals Service Center Institute
Michigan Soft Drink Association
National Aquaculture Association
National Association of Chemical Distributors
National Association of Convenience Stores
National Association of Manufacturers
National Association of Sporting Goods Wholesalers
National Association of Truck Stop Operators
National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors
National Automatic Merchandising Association
National Beer Wholesalers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Chain Restaurants
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Energy & Fuels Institute
National Fastener Distributors Association
National Franchisee Association
National Grain and Feed Association
National Grocers Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Onion Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Private Truck Council
National Propane Gas Association
National Ready Mixed Concrete Association
National Restaurant Association

National Retail Federation
National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association
National Tank Truck Carriers
National Waste and Recycling Association
Nestlé
New Hampshire Beverage Association
Next Generation in Trucking Association
Niagara Bottling, LLC
North American Meat Institute
North American Millers' Association
North American Renderers Association
North Carolina Beverage Association
Ohio Beverage Association
Pet Food Institute
Pet Industry Distributors Association
Plumbing Manufacturers International
Portland Cement Association
Power Transmission Distributors Association
PRINTING United Alliance
Reserve Organization of America
Retail Industry Leaders Association
Retail Packaging Association
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Security Hardware Distributors Association
Service Station Dealers of America and Allied Trades
SNAC International
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America
Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association
Specialty Soya & Grains Alliance
The Fertilizer Institute
Tire Industry Association
Transportation Intermediaries Association
Truck Renting and Leasing Association
Truckload Carriers Association
United Fresh Produce Association
United States Cattlemen's Association
UPS
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Virginia Beverage Association
Walmart
Water and Sewer Distributors of America
Wholesale Florist and Florist Supplier Association
Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America
Wisconsin Beverage Association

CC: Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation