

March 7, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science and Technology
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science and Technology
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment & Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen:

On behalf of our collective food and agricultural memberships, we write to urge further action to improve supply chain function with legislation to aid truck transportation – the largest freight mode with over 60 percent of all freight by weight according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Trucks are the linchpin of the transportation sector with most forms of freight trucked at least once during the supply chain process. Pipelines move almost another 20 percent of freight, while the rail and water modes combine for almost 20 percent.

The pandemic highlighted the importance of trucking to our nation's well-being and we believe economic and environmental benefits can be unlocked through legislative reform. We support the Safer Highways and Increased Performance for Interstate Trucking Act (SHIP IT) and the meaningful solutions it provides to address the need for more truck drivers, truck parking, productivity, environmental efficiency, options during emergencies, and flexibility for ag haulers.

SHIP IT aims to bolster our nation's driver workforce with two years of tax incentives for qualified drivers, grants to help cover driver schooling costs, and additional options for obtaining commercial drivers' licenses. The bill also provides authorization for additional parking facilities to help improve drivers' quality of life.

Further, the bill increases truck productivity and environmental efficiency by allowing states to opt into pilot programs to permit trucks with at least six axles to weigh up to 91,000 pounds on Interstate Highways. The additional axle and associated set of brakes serve to increase stopping capability. Trucks would be required to comply with the Federal bridge formula and axle weight limits to protect bridges and roads. In addition, SHIP IT provides the Secretary of Transportation the authority to relax truck weight limits during emergencies to help with relief efforts.

Lastly, SHIP IT helps ag haulers by providing a 150-air-miles exemption from hours-of-service regulations on the backend of hauls to provide needed flexibility for agriculture and its seasonal changes in freight demand.

We believe by supporting SHIP IT, Congress can achieve positive benefits for the environment while improving the economic competitiveness of the United States. We look forward to working with you in support of improving U.S. transportation and bolstering America's infrastructure.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Transportation Working Group

American Farm Bureau Federation
National Grain and Feed Association

cc: Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Members
House Committee on Agriculture Members