

April 14, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Science & Transportation

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chair
House Committee on Transportation
& Infrastructure

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce
Science & Transportation

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation
& Infrastructure

Dear Chairs Cantwell and DeFazio, and Ranking Members Wicker and Graves:

As the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation and the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure begin their work on a major infrastructure legislative package and/or surface transportation reauthorization bill, the more than 100 undersigned organizations write to express strong support for the DRIVE-Safe Act (S.659, H.R.1745), and to urge its inclusion in the forthcoming legislation. This strongly bipartisan legislation, which garnered the support of more than one third of the House and Senate in the 116th Congress, will address the nation's growing truck driver shortage by promoting opportunity and enhanced safety training for emerging members of the transportation workforce.

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.

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 monumental 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 DMV's 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.

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.

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 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. And it will bolster and support our nation's supply chain, which is an issue of heightened urgency as our nation recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your attention and thoughtful consideration of this important and timely legislation. We look forward to working with you to include the DRIVE-Safe Act in your Committees' forthcoming infrastructure legislation and/or surface transportation reauthorization bill.

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 Services 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 Manufacturers
National Association of Sporting Goods Wholesalers
National Association of Truckstop 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
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
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
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 & Transportation
Members of the House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure