

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chairman
Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
2358-A Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Price
Ranking Member
Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
2358-A Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Price,

We thank you for your past support for the State Maritime Academies (SMAs) and urge you to support robust levels of funding for Fiscal Year 2017, particularly for the National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV) program. While the vast majority of operating revenues for the SMAs come from non-federal sources such as tuition and state funding, the federal funding that the SMAs receive is critical to their mission.

Each year, the American domestic maritime industry contributes nearly 500,000 jobs and \$100 billion in economic impact, providing tens of billions of dollars in wages and benefits. U.S.-licensed mariners also serve as eyes and ears on our inland and coastal waterways and provide critical sealift capacity in support of our armed services at home and abroad. Our nation has long maintained a strong maritime industry because of these economic and national security benefits.

Increased industry need for federally licensed mariners means good-paying jobs are being created in this sector of our economy. However, the U.S. is facing an impending shortage of trained mariners. Such a shortage will have a severely negative impact on national and economic security, making the work of the six SMAs especially important. As you know SMAs are located across the country and produce more than 70 percent of the newly U.S.-licensed merchant marine officers each year. Collectively, the SMAs have a nearly 100 percent placement rate for their licensed graduates, who come from all 50 states.

The president's proposed budget includes critical funding to continue the federal-state partnership through which SMAs provide first-class, four-year STEM degrees to licensed graduates who immediately enter the workforce. However, we are concerned that the request does not take the necessary steps toward investing in the National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV) program. For nearly 150 years, the Federal government has provided training vessels to the SMAs, and in return, the academies have produced the highest-quality licensed mariners, who have served this country in war and peace. New NSMVs would be federally-owned assets that would replace the current, aging mixture of repurposed vessels that are on average more than 35 years old. Crucially, these vessels would be assigned by the government to the SMAs for use as training ships. Such funding is particularly necessary given that the largest training ship, the *T/S Empire State VI*, is already near the end of its useful life. Should this vessel need to be taken offline before the first NSMV is completed, it would result in a crushing disruption in our nation's ability to train new mariners.

Recently, Gen. Darren W. McDew, the commander of the U.S. Transportation Command, which oversees military sealift, spoke to the critical role that commercial mariners play in national security. He highlighted, "the reality that the mariners who move international trade and those who transport wartime cargo come from the same dwindling pool of U.S. mariners." These are the very mariners who graduated from America's six SMAs and just one more reason why this funding is so important.

We thank you again for your previous support and urge your continued attention to this issue by providing robust funding for the State Maritime Academies programs. We particularly urge funding for the NSMV program at a level that addresses the critical requirement for mariners highlighted by Gen. McDew and others. We look forward to working with you in order to sustain the mission of our State Maritime Academies.

Sincerely,



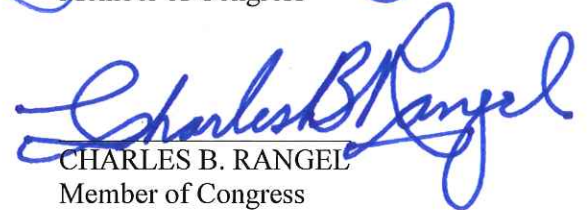
DANIEL BENISHEK
Member of Congress



JOSEPH CROWLEY
Member of Congress



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



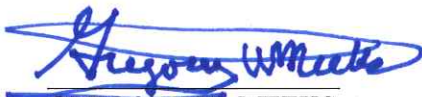
CHARLES B. RANGEL
Member of Congress



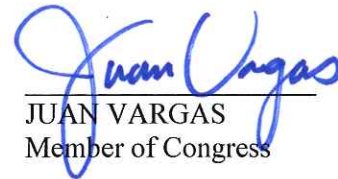
CHELLIE PINGREE
Member of Congress



JANICE HAHN
Member of Congress



GREGORY W. MEEKS
Member of Congress



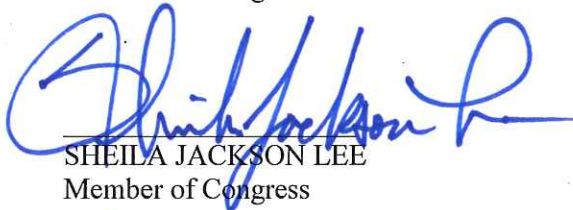
JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress



JAMES R. LANGEVIN
Member of Congress



CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress



SHEILA JACKSON LEE
Member of Congress



MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress



MATT CARTWRIGHT
Member of Congress



PETER T. KING
Member of Congress



ALAN S. LOWENTHAL
Member of Congress



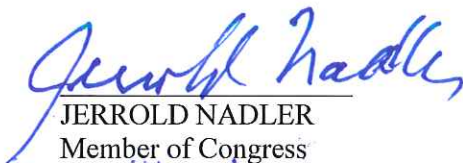
JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, III
Member of Congress



KATHERINE M. CLARK
Member of Congress



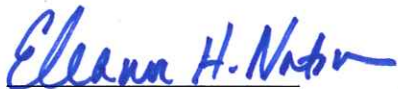
LOIS FRANKEL
Member of Congress



JERROLD NADLER
Member of Congress



WILLIAM R. KEATING
Member of Congress



ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress



CANDICE S. MILLER
Member of Congress



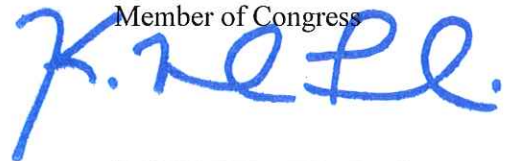
JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress



BRADLEY BYRNE
Member of Congress



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Member of Congress



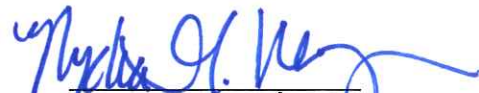
MARK TAKAI
Member of Congress



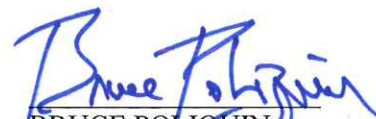
KATHLEEN M. RICE
Member of Congress



SEAN PATRICK MALONEY
Member of Congress




NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ
Member of Congress



BRUCE POLIQUIN
Member of Congress


JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress


STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress


JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress


NIKI TSONGAS
Member of Congress


DON YOUNG
Member of Congress

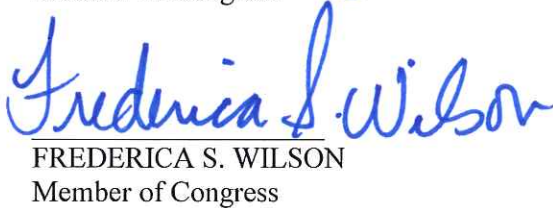

ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS
Member of Congress


DANIEL M. DONOVAN, JR.
Member of Congress


GENE GREEN
Member of Congress


GRACE MENG
Member of Congress


FRANK C. GUINTA
Member of Congress


FREDERICA S. WILSON
Member of Congress

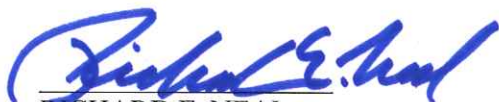

PAUL TONKO
Member of Congress


ELIZABETH H. ESTY
Member of Congress

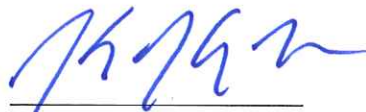

HAKEEM S. JEFFRIES
Member of Congress


RANDY K. WEBER, SR.
Member of Congress


MICHAEL E. CAPUANO
Member of Congress



RICHARD E. NEAL
Member of Congress



JOHN KATKO
Member of Congress



YVETTE D. CLARKE
Member of Congress



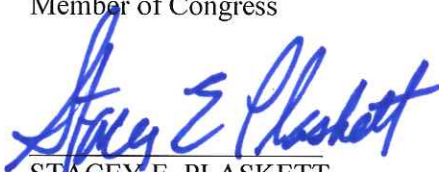
CHRISTOPHER P. GIBSON
Member of Congress



LEE M. ZELDIN
Member of Congress



SUSAN A. DAVIS
Member of Congress



STACEY E. PLASKETT
Member of Congress



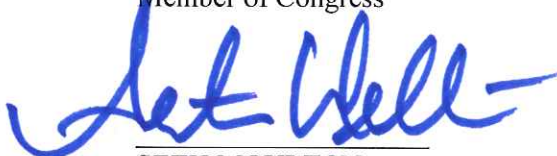
DUNCAN HUNTER
Member of Congress



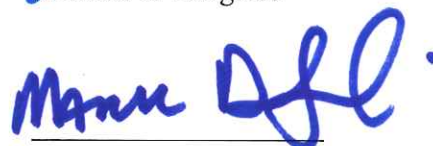
SCOTT H. PETERS
Member of Congress



JOHN CONYERS, JR.
Member of Congress



SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress



MARK DeSAULNIER
Member of Congress



CHARLES W. BOUSTANY, JR.
Member of Congress



DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.
Member of Congress



FRANK A. LoBIONDO
Member of Congress



PETE OLSON
Member of Congress

State Maritime Academies
March 17, 2016
Page 6



BRIAN BABIN
Member of Congress



ERIC SWALWELL
Member of Congress