



FEDERAL MARITIME COMMISSION

Office of Commissioner Carl W. Bentzel
Office of Commissioner Daniel B. Maffei
Washington, D.C. 20573

January 28, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, District of Columbia 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write regarding the urgent issue of vaccinating the Nation's maritime workforce as soon as possible. We recommend that this essential workforce be prioritized for vaccinations, and in the interim be given access to rapid testing in order to help minimize workplace disruption, given their critical role in moving medical supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE), and handling what is an unprecedented amount of consumer goods arriving at our gateway ports.

While we recognize that prioritization for vaccination will be determined by the individual states, we believe that the Administration should emphasize the need to keep the supply chain transportation workforce in mind as each state deploys rapid COVID-19 testing and implements the vaccination process.

From Maine to Texas, the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) has reported 784 positive tests with 1,855 quarantines from March 2020 to January 25, 2021. During the same period, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) reported that 1,034 maritime workers contracted COVID-19 in California, Washington, and Oregon. These numbers continue to trend upward and show the risk to our Nation's supply chain.

A large-scale workforce disruption from COVID-19 would be disastrous for the immediate and long-term fluidity of the supply chain and delivery of goods to Americans. We must address the immediate health challenges facing maritime workers with continued COVID-19 outbreaks and their impact on the increasing maritime workload and unprecedented volume surges.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the challenges and the supreme importance of the industry's efforts to keep us supplied during COVID-19. 2020 illustrated our Nation's reliance on maritime transportation and international trade. Our society has adapted to dramatic, but necessary, changes in how we work, travel, and go to school. What remains unchanged is the essential need for cargo to move through our ports. The sacrifices, resilience, and selflessness of those who work in the maritime industry have kept our supply chain functioning and our economy

connected, and will serve as a foundation as we look to recover as a country in 2021. For this to happen, we must provide immediate vaccination to the maritime workforce.

We are grateful for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Carl W. Bentzel



Commissioner Daniel B. Maffei

CC:

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Chairwoman, Senate Commerce Committee
The Honorable Roger Wicker, Ranking Member Senate Commerce Committee
The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chairman, House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member, House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
Acting Secretary, Norris Cochran, Department of Health and Human Services
Acting Secretary, David Pekoske, Department of Homeland Security
Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Tim Manning, White House COVID-19 Response Team Supply Chain Coordinator
Bechara Choucair, White House Vaccinations Coordinator