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June 10, 2024

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member

Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
425 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to Sec. 354 of H.R. 7659, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2024, which would prohibit the establishment of anchorages on the Hudson River. This section in the House-passed bill represents an unqualified threat to safe navigation on all U.S. waterways and must not be included in either in the Senate's Coast Guard bill or in the final House-Senate conference agreement.

Sec. 354 is objectionable because it contradicts a 2023 Coast Guard report—mandated by Congress in the 2020 Coast Guard Authorization Act—that recommended establishing a limited number of anchorage areas on the Hudson River because of the inadequacy of current anchorage capacity. In support of this conclusion—which was reinforced by input from local stakeholders—the Coast Guard stated that it was “not aware of any incidents within the study area of collisions or other maritime casualties related to imprudent commercial anchoring.”

Anchorage are needed for safety, especially when conditions on the Hudson River are not optimal for safe navigation. Such conditions could include foul weather, ice, vessel traffic congestion, lack of available safe berthing, or crew fatigue. Tug and barge units anchor only on a temporary basis and out of the main channel of the river where other vessels operate. Anchorages in no way lead to increased traffic on the river—but, as the Coast Guard acknowledged—are a way of enhancing safety for vessels currently operating on the Hudson.

Barging is the safest, most energy-efficient and environmentally friendly form of commercial transportation available, both in New York and the nation. Every licensed pilot operating a tug on the Hudson has met Coast Guard-mandated recency requirements of having made twelve round-trip transits on the river, one-third of those at night. However, if enacted, Sec. 354 would prohibit anchorages on two-thirds of the Hudson River, thereby placing vessels and their crews at risk. In addition, enactment of Sec. 354 would set a precedent that

potentially opens other waterways to similar proposals antithetical to safety. We urge you to oppose Sec. 354 of H.R. 7659.

Sincerely,

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