

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20515

September 10, 2020

Dr. Robert R. Redfield
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Mr. Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Dr. Redfield and Acting Secretary Wolf:

We are writing in support of access to COVID-19 testing for essential U.S. mariners as a voluntary part of the pre-screening process prior to boarding a vessel. This testing would supplement and strengthen the procedures, from questionnaires to temperature checks, that companies have already put in place to pre-screen vessel crewmembers.

Like all Americans, the U.S. maritime industry has faced challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic in profound ways. However, the men and women who support the domestic maritime supply chain have proven resilient throughout this global health crisis, playing a key role in moving essential cargoes and keeping our nation's economy afloat. The industry and their workers have been a critical part of our pandemic response by transporting medical supplies, hand sanitizer, and personal protective equipment—and in some instances, the raw materials necessary to manufacture them.

Keeping the virus off commercial vessels remains of paramount importance to both the health and safety of vessel crewmembers and the resilience of the domestic maritime supply chain — especially as opportunities for mariner exposure off the job magnify with the relaxation of state and local stay-at-home orders. A commercial vessel operating continuously for two to four weeks at a time is effectively a self-quarantined environment, but if COVID-19 is present, it is also an environment in which the virus can spread rapidly.

Both the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) took timely action to keep the maritime supply chain operating safely at the start of the crisis. DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) developed early guidance identifying mariners and other industry personnel as essential infrastructure workers, thus ensuring that they were able to continue to do their important jobs as states and localities ordered others to stay home. The CDC also produced authoritative guidance for vessel operators on preventing and managing suspected cases of COVID-19, which has contributed to keeping infections among the mariner workforce to a minimum.

CISA's Transportation Systems Sector Coordinating Committee has proposed that the federal government revise its guidance on COVID-19 testing priorities and group critical infrastructure workers alongside healthcare facility workers and first responders who are given precedence in testing. We urge you to consider this recommendation and ask DHS and the CDC to once again

take urgent action to support continuity of operations and worker health and safety in the U.S. maritime industry. We must ensure that these essential workers can access tests to safeguard the continuity of operations in key segments of our economy, including the maritime supply chain. The ability to continue moving essential cargoes will directly bear on our nation's ability to weather this crisis.

We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

/s/

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/

Rodney Davis
Member of Congress

/s/

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

/s/

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/

Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress

/s/

Mike Bost
Member of Congress



Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress

/s/

Don Young
Member of Congress

/s/

Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress

/s/

Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress

/s/

Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress

/s/

Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress

/s/

Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress