

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 116<sup>th</sup> 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