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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

March 23, 2017

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, Southeast
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

As you evaluate the Department's priorities, we believe it is imperative for you to prioritize the security of its information systems. Pursuant to the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (Pub. L. 113-283), the head of each federal agency is responsible for the security of that agency's information and systems. In addition, the Commission on Enhancing National Cybersecurity's December 2016 report recommended that agencies implement the Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The Committee has strongly supported the public-private partnership process employed in developing this framework and included the process in the Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-274). The availability, integrity, and confidentiality of the Department's systems, especially those used for traffic control and oversight of highway safety, are critical to ensuring safe transportation across the country.

Last month, the Committee held a hearing entitled, "A Look Ahead: Inspector General Recommendations for Improving Federal Agencies." At the hearing, Department of Transportation Inspector General Calvin L. Scovel III testified that cybersecurity remains a significant challenge as technology evolves and threats proliferate. Recent Office of Inspector General reports have found the Department's cybersecurity program remains ineffective and many of its information security controls are deficient. More broadly, the Government Accountability Office has made approximately 2,500 recommendations to improve information security programs across the federal government over the past several years. Departments and agencies have yet to implement many of these recommendations.

We ask that you commit to making the cybersecurity of the Department's systems a top priority and that you keep the Committee informed as you plan to implement this effort. Thank you for your cooperation with this important matter.

Sincerely,



JOHN THUNE
Chairman



CORY GARDNER
U.S. Senator

cc: The Honorable Bill Nelson, Ranking Member