

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 25, 2021

The Honorable Michael Khouri
Chairman
Federal Maritime Commission
800 North Capitol Street, NW
Washington, DC 20573

Dear Chairman Khouri,

We write to express concerns with ongoing disruptions at our nation's major ports, which are having ripple effects across the supply chain. We were encouraged to see the Federal Maritime Commission's recent announcement that the agency is issuing information demand orders to ocean carriers and marine terminal operators to determine if legal obligations related to detention and demurrage practices are being met. We support this swift action, which is being led by Commissioner Rebecca F. Dye.

As you are aware, our nation's ports are experiencing significant increases in cargo volume. This volume is increasingly one-sided, with imports far outweighing exports. This imbalance is causing bottlenecks at key points in the supply chain and is affecting numerous sectors that rely on a competitive market, such as agricultural exporters and retailers. Truckers and other transportation operators are also facing challenges in handling the spike in imports.

The Commission's information-gathering initiative will provide valuable insights into these and other challenges. It should also provide information on ocean carriers and terminal operators' practices relating to container returns and container availability for exporters. We ask that you keep us informed on your findings and any plans for further action on these matters.

Throughout the pandemic, front line workers, port operators, truck drivers, maritime employees, dockworkers, and others have kept our economy moving by supporting the delivery of essential goods and supplies. These critical infrastructure employees have ensured that U.S. businesses and households receive the products they depend upon. We greatly appreciate their contributions and the Commission's work to support their efforts. Your information demand order will help support their critical role in our supply chain.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and your ongoing work to ensure our freight network remains fluid. We look forward to working with you to address this important issue.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Roger F. Wicker in blue ink.

Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Handwritten signature of John Boozman in blue ink.

John Boozman
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry