

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2020

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

We applaud your hard work, especially in uncertain times, to reauthorize the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). As you finalize the language and prepare for full Senate action, we write to inform you of an amendment we have filed to the 2020 reauthorization bill to codify a unified agreement on the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF). The amendment will benefit our ports of all sizes and regions and continue to promote the safe and efficient movement of goods through a broad array of geographically diverse ports and harbors. We feel equitable distribution of the HMTF is absolutely critical in keeping the country's ports competitive and our workforce strong.

Recent iterations of the Water Resources and Development Act – first in 2014, and again in 2016 – enacted key HMTF reforms to increase the use of the HMTF for operation and maintenance of federally authorized navigation channels and waterways, ensure greater equity for ports, and support the movement of goods throughout the nation. In addition, the CARES Act contained key changes to the HMTF, providing for full use of Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) revenue collections. While these changes all marked significant progress, this year's WRDA represents an opportunity to permanently fix the HMTF by providing a stable, suitable, and fair funding formula to allocate HMTF revenues. Doing so will support our ports, encourage economic growth, and reduce risks by enhancing safety.

Building on the successful provision to allow for the full use of the HMTF, now is the time to enact a broad-based agreement to address long-standing concerns over HMTF spending. A comprehensive fix would balance the needs of all regions and all ports by providing a minimum allocation for both small and emerging ports and the Great Lakes, offer funding to HMT net contributors (donors), and build on Congressional intent in the 2014 WRRDA for donor and energy transfer ports. It would also help combat cargo diversion from ports in the U.S. to international ports, which hurts American competitiveness and labor.

Our nation's ports account for over a quarter of America's economy and 31 million jobs nationwide. Deteriorating harbors and waterways could significantly harm our port system through the vessel groundings, harbor closures, and negative economic impacts for importers and exporters alike. To ensure our ports can remain competitive and viable, we must ensure our

navigation channels and waterways are maintained to the necessary depths and widths. To sustain, grow, and strengthen our nation's port infrastructure, we respectfully request your consideration and support of our HMTF amendment to this year's WRDA legislation. We look forward to working with you on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

/s/ Patty Murray
United States Senator

/s/ Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator