



RETAIL INDUSTRY LEADERS ASSOCIATION

99 M Street, SE
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20003

www.rila.org

July 13, 2021

The Honorable Tom Carper
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment
and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment
and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation
425 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Carper, Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Capito, and Ranking Member Wicker:

The announcement of a bipartisan infrastructure framework agreement from the White House and members of the United States Senate represents an opportunity to make bold and needed investments in the nation's transportation and infrastructure programs including the deficiencies in our nation's supply chain network. The Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA) stands ready to assist your committees as you work with the Biden-Harris administration and Senate leadership to pass this vital piece of legislation.

RILA is the trade association of the world's largest, most innovative, and recognizable retail companies and brands. We convene decision-makers, advocate for the industry, and promote operational excellence and innovation. Our aim is to elevate a dynamic industry by transforming the environment in which retailers operate. RILA members include more than 200 retailers, product manufacturers, and service suppliers, which together account for more than \$1.5 trillion in annual sales, millions of American jobs, and more than 100,000 stores, manufacturing facilities, and distribution centers domestically and abroad. RILA's membership includes some of the largest importers in the United States.

RILA members are also among the largest users of the global supply chain and America's freight transportation system. Their ability to successfully move products from ports to distribution centers and ultimately to stores and customers depends upon port fluidity and access to efficient and reliable methods of transportation to keep costs competitive for consumers. Throughout the COVID pandemic, U.S. retailers have done a remarkable job in keeping the flow of goods moving to consumers despite myriad challenges in their supply chains. Even today as America regains its

footing and continues its recovery from the pandemic, the retail supply chains remain under tremendous strain due to an extraordinary confluence of circumstances including; significant demand, constrained capacity and equipment shortages, and systemic challenges of existing transportation networks and ports.

Congress, particularly, your committees, have the opportunity in the upcoming infrastructure bill to invest in the long-term viability of our ports, railways, and highways to reduce congestion and the likelihood of future disruptions. As the bipartisan framework undergoes legislative drafting, RILA implores each committee to include language that modernizes our supply chains for the future. Not only will this improve timely access to essential products for American consumers but will increase domestic productivity and U.S. economic competitiveness.

The base framework in the bipartisan agreement includes \$16 billion for our nation's ports. It is important that members of Congress allocate these funds effectively and efficiently, including a mechanism for the advisory input of major infrastructure users, to address the current challenges and prioritize investment for maximum impact. Modernizing our seaports and supporting innovation will create jobs and make American ports a model for the rest of the world. This legislation should also dedicate resources to data infrastructure for ports that enables visibility and plannability to help retailers—and all port users—successfully meet their commitments to their workers, customers, and communities they serve.

We applaud the work of all the parties and especially your committee's tireless work to make a generational investment in our nation's infrastructure. RILA and our members look forward to continuing to work with Congress and the administration to advance a bold, innovative, and future forward infrastructure bill. Our economy needs to make the investment now, and leading retailers stand ready to support you in this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Hanson", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael Hanson
Senior Executive Vice President, Public Affairs

