

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 6, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write to express strong support for the Department of Transportation's proposed pilot program to allow commercial driver's license holders between the ages of 18 and 20 to operate commercial motor vehicles in interstate commerce. Your pilot program will greatly enhance transportation safety, provide young Americans with the launching pad to a rewarding career in the trucking industry, and bolster a workforce that has been essential in responding to the COVID pandemic.

As you know, the proposed pilot program closely resembles the DRIVE Safe Act (H.R.1374/S.569), legislation that enjoys large bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. Support for the pro-safety and pro-jobs legislation has been driven in part by the driver shortage confronting our nation. The trucking industry was short an estimated 60,000 drivers in the most recent analysis of the industry and will need to hire roughly 1.1 million new drivers over the next decade to keep pace with growing demand and an aging workforce. As a direct result, companies in supply chains across the economy are facing higher transportation costs, leading to increased prices for consumers on everything from household goods to food at the grocery store. If successful, this pilot program may provide a direct means for the trucking industry to partially alleviate its workforce challenges, which in turn strengthens our domestic supply chains.

Like the DRIVE Safe Act, your proposed pilot program is also firmly grounded in transportation safety. Safety is the primary purpose and goal of the Department's regulation of commercial vehicles, and the proposed pilot program will take significant steps to ensuring the safe and efficient movement of interstate commerce. The robust training regimen established by this pilot program goes far beyond what is currently required for 18-to-20-year-old drivers in 49 states and the District of Columbia, laying the groundwork for significant safety improvements on our nation's roads and bridges. This will lead to a highly trained and safety-focused workforce moving our nation forward.

Without question, the mobilization of the trucking industry in response to the COVID-19 emergency has demonstrated how critical the trucking workforce is to the economy and our emergency response supply chain. Given the driver shortage facing the industry, we are concerned that any attrition during this and future emergencies may cripple the industry's ability to effectively and swiftly deliver goods and supplies. A pilot program will hopefully reinvigorate this essential workforce, ensuring that the trucking industry is well-equipped to confront the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and any future health crisis.

Thank you for moving forward with this important pilot program, which closely mirrors the DRIVE Safe Act, which we hope will become law soon. We look forward to working closely with you in this effort to support and bolster both transportation safety and our essential trucking workforce.

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress



Troy Balderson
Member of Congress



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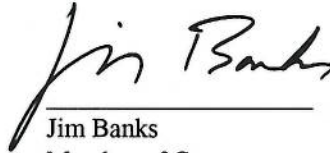
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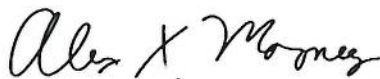
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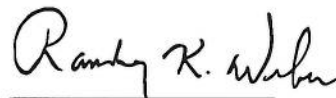
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