



March 18, 2024

The Honorable Sam Graves, Chair
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Daniel Webster, Chair
Subcommittee on Coast Guard and
Maritime Transportation
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Salud Carbajal, Ranking
Subcommittee on Coast Guard and
Maritime Transportation
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, Chairman Webster and Ranking Member Carbajal:

As the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee considers the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act of 2024, it is our understanding that you and your colleagues are being asked to include provisions that would significantly weaken protections afforded to merchant mariners under the Safe Seas Act. Specifically, we understand that certain amendments would eliminate the current reporting and investigation requirements that arise when a mariner is subject to non-sexual harassment, thereby vesting sole responsibility to respond to such incidents within the shipping company itself. In addition, we are deeply concerned about pre-emptive changes affecting the retention of video and audio recorded aboard U.S. flag vessels intended to protect victims in the workplace.

On behalf of the licensed and unlicensed American merchant mariners we represent, we strongly oppose these efforts and any such amendments that would reduce the protections and recourse available to mariners. As the U.S. Coast Guard moves forward with implementing the Safer Seas Act, any statutory changes to existing reforms must not be made prematurely and done so in close consultation with maritime labor. Our unions remain deeply committed to improving the culture and safety within our industry. Marine employers must share that commitment, which should extend to shoreside training in certified SASH prevention programs with live instructors rather than perfunctory computer-based training that is quickly reduced to checking off boxes. Ultimately, every mariner must benefit from a workplace environment that is free from all forms of abuse and harassment, sexual and otherwise. To do otherwise, simply because it may be more convenient for a vessel owner and operator, represents a step backward, a step our organizations strongly urge Congress not to take.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this important matter as we collectively move forward to improve the culture and safety within the maritime industry.

Sincerely,

Willie Barrere, President, American Maritime Officers

Mark Clements, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Dave Connolly, President, Sailors' Union of the Pacific

David Heindel, President, Seafarers International Union

Don Marcus, President, International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots

Anthony Poplawski, President, Marine Firemen's Union

Greg Regan, President, Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Adam Vokac, President, Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association