

Good afternoon, Chairman LoBiondo, Ranking Member Larsen and members of the subcommittee.

On behalf of the Seafarers International Union and our fellow maritime unions, **MMP, MEBA and AMO**, I thank you for conducting this hearing, for the opportunity to testify and for your continued support of the U.S. Merchant Marine.

As the organizations that represent merchant mariners, we have a deep interest in our nation's economic and national security. Our organizations are focused on jobs, increasing the size of our U.S.-flag merchant marine and seeking opportunities for workers across America to obtain the good paying, secure jobs that keep our economy moving forward.

We strongly support the National Export Initiative and will work with Congress and the Administration to ensure its success. Doubling exports is an ambitious goal but we believe it is an achievable one.

However, in order for us to meet that goal, we must ensure that the American maritime industry remains strong both at home and abroad. We must ensure that our ports and infrastructure can handle the additional capacity needed to meet these goals. We must defend programs that support the merchant marine like the Jones Act, the Maritime Security Program and Cargo Preference. We must innovate and expand our capacity by redeveloping

our coastwise trade through America's Marine Highways program. And we must reform the Harbor Maintenance Tax, expand the Tonnage Tax, and create a national regulatory regime for vessel discharges.

Only by supporting our existing programs, reducing the regulatory burden on the industry and seeking opportunities to expand the industry will we be able to create jobs and increase U.S. exports.

Congress and the Administration must support the Jones Act and our cargo preference laws. Both have been under considerable attack recently, and losing either of them would destroy the United States Merchant Marine. The Jones Act ensures we have the domestic job base in peace time we need to support our troops in war time. And our cargo preference laws provide the cargo we need to keep our ships moving. Put simply, the maritime industry's lifeblood is cargo. It's what creates jobs and it's what will help continue our nation's economic recovery.

But we cannot just simply defend the Jones Act and our cargo preference laws. We must actively work to expand the industry. We must redevelop our coastwise trade. Europe has already discovered that using feeder vessels to move cargo between ports is an economical and fast way of getting goods and people from place to place. They have done it and their model will work well here in America. It's time for America to redevelop our coastwise trade. It will not only create thousands of jobs but by utilizing the latest technologies offers

an opportunity to provide an effective “Green” solution to the dangerous overcrowding of our highways and infrastructure, and the serious issues this situation represents. We hope Congress will work with the industry to help make the Marine Highways program a reality.

We also need to defend our cargo preference laws and ensure that they are being enforced. The efforts of some to cut hundreds of millions of dollars from the PL-480 Food for Peace program, if successful, will harm many of our ship operators beyond repair. We must not allow that to happen. And lax enforcement of the program has resulted in many preference cargos being shipped on foreign vessels, which also hurts our operators and our mariners. This must stop. We need strong enforcement of the cargo preference laws.

In terms of enhancing the marine transportation system, a simple means of doing so is regulatory reform, not only helping the ship operator but the mariner as well. Today, mariners have to jump through dozens of hoops just to enter the industry and that is a deterrent to attracting new mariners. When a mariner goes for her physical and drug screening, she needs to bring roughly 100 pages worth of supporting documentation for review. Hundreds of pages of documentation – and that’s before they apply for a TWIC, a merchant mariner credential, an STCW certificate and whatever else may be required for the job. We need to seriously consider how to make it easier for potential mariners to enter our industry.

In conclusion, maritime labor believes the best way to enhance our maritime transportation system and create jobs is to protect our existing programs, expand the ones that work well, redevelop our coastwise trade, and ensure that our existing laws are enforced. Doing so will keep America competitive, put mariners to work and allow us to help meet the goals of the National Export Initiative.

I thank the committee for allowing me to testify today, and I'd be happy to take any questions you may have.