Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515
February 12, 2019

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write as strong supporters of the Department of Transportation and the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD), about an urgent matter that will have important consequences for our national shipbuilding industrial base.

As you are aware, MARAD plans to fund the construction of a fleet of National Security Multi-Mission Vessels. These state-of-the-art ships will replace the training vessels currently used by our state maritime academies, and perform other national security functions.

The six planned vessels are urgently needed, since the existing MARAD training vessels are outdated and require MARAD to spend increasing amounts of funds simply to keep them in operation. The "youngest" of these ships is more than 30 years old, and the "oldest" is more than 50 years old. It makes little sense to have America's future merchant seaman training on outmoded vessels. The need has never been greater for a newer modern fleet of ships.

We are hopeful that you will do all you can to make sure that MARAD maintains its aggressive timeline for the construction of this fleet, including delivery of the lead replacement ship in time for the 2022 summer sea term. To that end, you should ensure that the contract to build the first National Security Multi-Mission Vessel is signed no later than Spring of 2019. If the first ship is delayed, the entire fleet will be delayed – and delay benefits no one.

Since this is a critical project for our national shipbuilding industrial base, it is imperative that MARAD select the right yard for this important work. We firmly believe that Philly Shipyard is an ideal candidate to receive this contract. For more than 20 years, Philly Shipyard has specialized in constructing ocean-going merchant vessels, with an impressive record of timely, on-budget deliveries. The yard has delivered 29 vessels since 2003 alone – which represent nearly half of all U.S. large commercial vessels built in that time.

Moreover, more than $350M in public and private funding has been invested in the physical infrastructure at the shipyard since 1997. Philly Shipyard now boasts some of the finest facilities anywhere in the world.

In addition, Philly Shipyard has formed a successful partnership with the Philadelphia Metal Trades Council, which represents ten unions at the shipyard. More than $300M in public and private funding has been invested in workforce training programs since 1997. Because of this exemplary record of management-labor cooperation, Philly Shipyard has never experienced a strike or work stoppage.

A skilled shipbuilding workforce, U.S. East Coast dry-dock capacity, and state-of-the-art shipbuilding infrastructure are all essential components of our nation's defense readiness that might be jeopardized without the work provided by the MARAD ships. Currently, the last ship scheduled for construction at Philly Shipyard will be completed in Spring of 2019. Awarding the construction of these National

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Security Multi-Mission Vessels to Philly Shipyard, will ensure the continued vitality of this important shipbuilding asset and preserve a critical component of our defense industrial base.

For all of these reasons, we would strongly recommend Philly Shipyard for this vital shipbuilding project. No shipyard anywhere in the U.S. is more prepared to handle this critical work.

Sincerely,

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Susan Wild
Member of Congress

Lloyd Smucker
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Jeff Van Drew
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