

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

May 7, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy, and Schumer:

We write to you in support of our state and local government-operated passenger and cargo ferry service, the Steamship Authority (SSA), which has experienced unparalleled economic challenges due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. This unprecedented time means extensive measures have been taken to prioritize public health, which have led to a significant drop in ferry passenger activity. As a result, ferry services like the SSA need critical financial support to weather these economic challenges, and we urge you to provide additional support for the industry in ongoing negotiations of economic relief legislation. Specifically, we request the inclusion of at least \$3 billion for emergency ferry service relief, to be distributed nationally through the existing Construction of Ferry Boats and Ferry Terminal Facilities Formula Program.

In Massachusetts, SSA provides necessary transportation for those traveling on and off the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket to the mainland, including full-time residents transporting essential goods and services. For many, the SSA provides the only affordable transportation option in the region. However, the stay-at-home advisory issued by Governor Baker on March 23,<sup>1</sup> which was recently extended to May 18,<sup>2</sup> has had a significant impact on

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<sup>1</sup> Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, "Governor Charlie Baker Orders All Non-Essential Businesses To Cease In Person Operation, Directs the Department of Public Health to Issue Stay at Home Advisory For Two Weeks," March 23, 2020, <https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-charlie-baker-orders-all-non-essential-businesses-to-cess-in-person-operation>.

<sup>2</sup> Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, "Baker-Polito Administration Extends Non-Essential Business Closures to May 18th, Announces Reopening Advisory Board," April 28, 2020, <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-extends-non-essential-business-closures-to-may-18th-announces>.

SSA ferry services. Furthermore, the Governor declared a state of emergency on March 10,<sup>3</sup> and his request for a federal major disaster declaration was granted later that month.<sup>4</sup>

Due to the dramatic decrease in ridership as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SSA is struggling to continue their operations and the SSA has stated that they will not be able to provide needed services to the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket after this month without financial relief.<sup>5</sup> Between March 17 and April 14, the SSA has lost an estimated \$2.99 million in revenue.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, in a letter to Governor Baker, Robert Davis, the general manager of SSA, reported losses of about \$1 million a week because of the decreased ridership related to COVID-19.<sup>7</sup>

The SSA is obligated to service the Cape and Islands year round and relies on fare revenue, especially during the busy summer season.<sup>8</sup> The pandemic, however, hit right around the time SSA begins to see an influx of seasonal passengers. The SSA stated that their ridership is down to 15 percent of the volume compared to previous years during the same time period.<sup>9</sup> Thus, without its main source of revenue, SSA was forced to drastically reduce the service schedule and furlough over 100 employees in an effort to extend operations until May 2020.<sup>10</sup>

The Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority recently allocated \$9.8 million to SSA from public transit funding provided by the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*.<sup>11</sup> This will help reduce the immediate economic hardship and assist the SSA, but additional support is necessary to ensure long term operations are able to continue. We understand that ferry services across the country are likely facing a similarly untenable situation.

As a result, we request that Congress allocate at least \$3 billion in emergency relief funding targeted specifically at ferry services, to be distributed through the existing Construction of Ferry Boats and Ferry Terminal Facilities Formula Program. This program has proven to be an

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<sup>3</sup> Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, "Executive Order: No. 591: Declaration of a State of Emergency to Respond to COVID-19," March 10, 2020, <https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-591-declaration-of-a-state-of-emergency-to-respond-to-covid-19>.

<sup>4</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency, "President Donald J. Trump Approves Major Disaster Declaration for Massachusetts," March 28, 2020, <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2020/03/28/president-donald-j-trump-approves-major-disaster-declaration-massachusetts>.

<sup>5</sup> Inquirer and Mirror, "Steamship Authority seeking state funding to continue ferry service," April 21, 2020, <https://www.ack.net/news/20200421/steamship-authority-seeking-state-funding-to-continue-ferry-service>.

<sup>6</sup> Boston Globe, "Steamship Authority pleads for state aid as revenues crater amid pandemic," Jeremy C. Fox, April 17, 2020, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/04/17/nation/steamship-authority-pleads-state-aid-revenues-crater-amid-pandemic/>.

<sup>7</sup> Cape Cod Times, "Federal Aid Expedited for Steamship Authority," Ethan Genter, April 24, 2020, <https://www.capecodtimes.com/news/20200424/federal-aid-expedited-for-steamship-authority>.

<sup>8</sup> Cape Cod Times, "Baker: State lacks jurisdiction to fund Steamship Authority," Ethan Genter, April 27, 2020, <https://www.capecodtimes.com/news/20200427/baker-state-lacks-jurisdiction-to-fund-steamship-authority>.

<sup>9</sup> Cape Cod Times, "Steamship Authority Seeks State Help to Maintain Service to Islands," Ethan Genter, April 17, 2020, <https://www.capecodtimes.com/news/20200417/steamship-authority-seeks-state-help-to-maintain-service-to-islands>.

<sup>10</sup> Cape Cod Times, "Steamship Authority Board Considers Cost Cutting Measures," Ethan Genter, April 21, 2020, <https://www.capecodtimes.com/news/20200421/steamship-authority-board-considers-cost-cutting-measures>.

<sup>11</sup> Boston Globe, "Steamship Authority to share in \$12 million in federal aid," Jeremy C. Fox, April 24, 2020, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/04/24/nation/steamship-authority-share-12-million-federal-aid/>.

effective means of distributing federal funding to ferry services according to the number of passengers and vehicles transported, as well as the number of nautical miles covered. Utilizing this formula, while expanding eligible expenses to include general operating costs and emergency measures related to the coronavirus, would ensure that ferry services across the country can still set sail after this pandemic subsides.

We urge you to support the passenger and cargo ferry service industry in Massachusetts and around the country.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

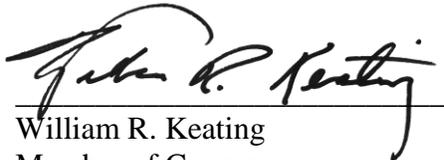
Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



William R. Keating  
Member of Congress