

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2021

Chairman Daniel Maffei  
Federal Maritime Commission  
800 North Capitol Street NW  
Washington, DC 20573

Dear Chairman Maffei,

On behalf of the small businesses in my state that depend on importing goods to serve their customers, I write with deep concern regarding the ongoing surge in container prices being charged by overseas carriers. As you are well aware, the significant increase in demand for imported goods has been compounded by a severe scarcity of containers and stagnant growth in capacity by ocean carrier companies, resulting in steep inflation of container prices for importers in my state and across the country. I have spoken with a number of small business owners who have cited increases of over 1,000 percent in the freight rates being charged for the overseas shipment of goods. Despite this surge in pricing, the unmitigated scarcity of containers has precluded many businesses from importing goods at adequate volumes to serve their customers. The combination of these factors poses an existential threat to the many small businesses in my state that rely on reasonable pricing from carriers and sufficient availability of containers to reliably obtain the volume of products needed to maintain their businesses.

The Federal Maritime Commission is tasked with ensuring a competitive and reliable ocean transportation supply system, one which serves to benefit our economy and protect U.S. businesses from unfair and deceptive practices. I am deeply grateful that the Commission is working to fulfill this mission during this current crisis through the Fact Finding 29 investigation, as well as through interagency coordination with the Department of Justice Antitrust Division to address competition issues in the ocean carrier industry. I also believe the implementation of the National Shipper Advisory Committee will provide much needed insight from shippers on how best to mitigate this crisis. However, more must be done to counter the current container pricing surge and protect our businesses from this unsustainable strain on their supply chains. To that end, I am requesting answers to the following questions.

1. What measures are available to the Commission to help encourage growth of capacity in the ocean carrier industry?
2. How is the Commission working to foster greater competition among ocean carriers?
3. How do the Commission's investigative initiatives serve to address the current container pricing surge?
4. How can the Commission streamline information sharing between carriers, shippers and the other integral links of foreign and domestic supply chains?

The exorbitant cost of overseas shipping poses a significant threat to the nation's fragile economic recovery from the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. It is imperative that appropriate action be taken to address the market conditions contributing to this surge in shipping costs. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senate