

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 24, 2024

The Honorable Michael Connor
Assistant Secretary of the Army – Civil Works
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Assistant Secretary Connor:

The collapse of the Francis Scott Key (Key) Bridge has left us all shaken and praying for the families who lost loved ones in this tragedy. As a former pastor with the Douglas Memorial Community Church in the heart of Baltimore, I am eager to work with my colleagues in Congress to reopen the Port of Baltimore, rebuild the Key Bridge, and help the Baltimore community get back on its feet.

However, this process will take time, and it is important that we not let the collapse of Key Bridge and the closure of the Port of Baltimore evolve into a nationwide supply chain crisis. Fortunately, due to an influx of federal investments through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Congressional appropriations, Georgia's ports in Brunswick and Savannah are well-positioned to temporarily accept additional cargo and help minimize disruptions to the supply chains that historically rely on the Port of Baltimore. That said, Georgia's ports will need cooperation and support from all levels of government as they manage the additional traffic diverted from Baltimore. Therefore, I respectfully request that you deploy the necessary resources to support the operation of Georgia's ports during this disruptive time, including by ensuring the Port of Brunswick is returned to its full authorized dimensions.

As the nation's leader in roll-on, roll-off and automotive cargo traffic, the Port of Baltimore plays an essential role in America's robust automotive industry.¹ Any long-term disruption to the nation's automotive supply chain could threaten a critical \$1 trillion industry and the 9.7 million jobs it supports, including Georgia's own burgeoning vehicle and battery manufacturing economy.² As reported by WJCL-Savannah, the Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) expects the Port of Brunswick – the nation's second leading automotive port – to receive some of the automotive cargo diverted from the Port of Baltimore during its temporary closure, with the Port of Savannah on standby for any container traffic overflows.³ Until the Port of Baltimore reopens, America will look to Georgia to ensure our vital automotive supply chain experiences minimal disruptions.

¹ *Roll-on Roll-off Cargo*, Maryland Department of Port Administration (Accessed April 9, 2024), <https://mpa.maryland.gov/Pages/roro.aspx>; <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenroberts/2024/03/26/georgia-port-is-best-fit-for-port-of-baltimores-car-imports/?sh=2f1390f56bec>.

² *Driving the U.S. Economy*, Alliance for Automotive Innovation (Accessed April 9, 2024), <https://www.autosinnovate.org/initiatives/the-industry>; See *Georgia Economic Insights*, Alliance for Automotive Innovation (Accessed April 9, 2024), <https://www.autosinnovate.org/resources/insights/ga>.

³ Brooke Butler, *Baltimore Bridge Collapse: How Savannah, Brunswick ports could be impacted*, WJCL (March 28, 2024), https://www.wjcl.com/article/baltimore-bridge-collapse-how-savannah-brunswick-ports-could-be-impacted/60333895?utm_campaign=snd-autopilot; Ken Roberts, *Georgia Port is Best Fit For Port of Baltimore's Car Imports* (March 26, 2024), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenroberts/2024/03/26/georgia-port-is-best-fit-for-port-of-baltimores-car-imports/?sh=2f1390f56bec>.

This is exactly why I was proud to champion the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in my first year as a U.S. Senator for Georgia. This historic legislation invests over \$17 billion in the country's ports and waterways to clear maintenance backlogs, expand operations, and prepare our nation's ports to be resilient in the face of unexpected supply chain disruptions. In just the first three years of this legislation, the Port of Brunswick received two grants totaling nearly \$30 million to increase both automotive and agricultural capacity at the port.⁴ I also fought to include more than \$80 million for Georgia's ports in the 2024 government funding bill, including \$44 million for operations and maintenance at the Port of Savannah, over \$11 million for construction of the Brunswick Harbor Modifications project, and an additional \$26 million to operate and maintain the Port of Brunswick at peak capacity and efficiency.⁵ Thanks to each of these substantial federal investments that I was proud to champion, Georgia's ports are prepared to respond to the temporary closure of the Port of Baltimore and help prevent disruptions to key supply chains like our nation's leading automotive industry.

As Georgia's ports continue to respond to the temporary closure of the Port of Baltimore and play an essential role in keeping critical supply chains running smoothly, I respectfully request that you deploy all necessary resources to support their operations.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to support Georgia's ports and the millions of Georgians and Americans across the country they serve.

Sincerely,



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

⁴ *U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg Announces Over \$241 Million in Grants for America's Ports*, U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration (December 23, 2021), <https://www.maritime.dot.gov/newsroom/press-releases/us-transportation-secretary-pete-buttigieg-announces-over-241-million; FY 2023-2024 INFRA Awards>, U.S. Department of Transportation (Accessed April 9, 2024), https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2024-01/INFRA%20Fact%20Sheets%20FY%202023-2024_Final_0.pdf

⁵ See Explanatory Statement: Division D – Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024, *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, Pub. L. No. 118-42*, <https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20240304/FY24%20EW%20Conference%20JES%20scan.pdf> at 16, 31, 145, 161.