

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 24, 2024

The Honorable Brian Kemp
Governor of Georgia
206 Washington Street
Suite 203, State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Kemp:

Thank you again for your October 30, 2023 letter regarding the Georgia Ports Authority's (GPA) effort to study further deepening and widening of the port of Savannah.¹ I was happy to initially respond to your letter on January 3, 2024, and I appreciate our strong partnership to serve the needs of GPA.² To that end, I write today following the recent collapse of the Francis Scott Key (Key) Bridge in Baltimore, Maryland, and the consequences for Georgia's ports and economy. I respectfully request that you join me in supporting Georgia's ports during this disruptive time for maritime trade and commerce, including by deploying additional resources as necessary to support GPA's operations.

The collapse of the Key Bridge has left us all shaken and praying for the families who lost loved ones in this tragedy, and 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 supply chain crisis that harms the Georgia economy. 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.

Nonetheless, Georgia's ports will need cooperation and support from all levels of government as they manage the additional traffic diverted from Baltimore. I know we share a commitment to supporting Georgia's ports and the economic activity they bring to the entire state of Georgia, such as through our shared efforts to further expand the Port of Savannah. That is why I hope we can work together to support Georgia's ports during this disruptive time, including by deploying additional state and federal resources as necessary to support their operations.

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.³ 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

¹ Letter from Governor Kemp to U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock (October 30, 2023).

² Letter from U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock to Governor Kemp (January 3, 2024)

³ *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>.

economy.⁴ As reported by WJCL-Savannah, the 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.⁵ Until the Port of Baltimore reopens, America will look to Georgia to ensure our vital automotive supply chain experiences minimal disruptions.

This is exactly why I was proud to champion the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This historic legislation invests over \$17 billion in the country’s ports and waterways to 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.⁶ I also fought to include more than \$80 million for Georgia’s ports in the 2024 government funding bill, including over \$37 million to expand capacity and efficiency at the Port of Brunswick.⁷ Thanks to each of these substantial federal investments, the Port of Brunswick is prepared to respond to the temporary closure of the Port of Baltimore and help prevent disruptions to our nation’s automotive supply chain.

Georgia’s leaders at the federal and state level have a long history of bipartisan support for Georgia’s ports and their role as an economic engine for the state and the rest of the country. As the Ports of Brunswick and Savannah continue to respond to the temporary closure of the Port of Baltimore, I look forward to working with you, maintaining our shared commitment to Georgia’s ports, and providing the necessary resources to support their operations during this disruptive time.

Sincerely,



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

⁴ *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>.

⁵ 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>.

⁶ *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

⁷ 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.