



February 3, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
 Speaker of the House
 United States House of Representatives
 Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
 Majority Leader
 United States Senate
 Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
 Republican Leader
 United States House of Representatives
 Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
 Republican Leader
 United States Senate
 Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The motorcoach, school bus and passenger vessel industries in the United States continue to be decimated by COVID and we need your help. We are writing to seek your support for our industries in a targeted relief package being developed by Senators Cardin and Wicker.

We deeply appreciate the \$2 billion in relief Congress provided in the CERTS program included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. Unlike all other modes of public transportation, this was the only specific relief our industries received during the pandemic and provided a fraction of what is needed to maintain a basic level of service. The program was oversubscribed by more than \$6.4 billion and that only accounts for losses incurred in 2020. Our industries continued to experience losses throughout 2021 and even into 2022 as the Delta and Omicron variants cancelled travel and closed schools.

As you know, Chairman Cardin and Senator Wicker are currently leading an effort to develop a bipartisan targeted relief package to help businesses still struggling because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand that discussions are ongoing, but we are thankful that based on what we have heard, they are planning to include relief for the motorcoach, school bus, and passenger vessel industries with additional CERTS funding, as well as a much-needed technical tax correction for the CERTS program.

Private motorcoach companies provide critical transportation services across the country, reducing congestion for urban centers while providing reliable and affordable transportation to millions of commuters and intercity travelers; connecting rural and underserved communities to jobs, education and critical services; supporting tourism and providing group travel for myriad organizations; moving the military and their equipment, including the transport of active-duty military and National Guard forces to protect the U.S. Capitol and Washington, D.C.; and serving as a vital resource to the emergency response community for natural disasters, including wildfires and hurricanes. Motorcoach operations to and from airports, transit stations, and Amtrak also ensure the national public transportation “network” functions efficiently.

The private school bus industry provides nearly 40% of the nation’s school bus service in 200,000 yellow school buses to 26 million children every day, who rely on the school bus as their primary way to get to and from school in the safest way possible. The industry not only transports children to and from school, but also provides critical delivery of school nutrition, supplies and Wi-Fi to students not able to attend school in-person. Sixty percent of private school bus contractors were not fully paid during school closures due to the pandemic.

The U.S. domestic passenger vessel industry moves more than 200 million passengers annually, providing both necessary transportation for commuters as well as recreational transportation in support of the nation's traditionally robust tourism economy. Most private companies operating passenger vessels lost their entire 2020 season or operated at dramatically reduced levels. Given this loss of revenue and customers in 2020, and the slow pace of return in 2021, many companies are simply hoping to survive until the pandemic comes under sufficient control to give members of the public confidence to return.

All these industries suffered additional losses in 2021. Motorcoach companies have lost more than 50 percent of the companies that make up the industry. Most of these businesses are small, nearly all are family-owned, and many were minority owned. During that same period, three-quarters of our 100,000 workers were laid off and many have still not returned to work. Of motorcoach companies that are still operating today, most are struggling to stay open as the pandemic and variants have forced Americans to curtail travel. Prior to the pandemic, the motorcoach industry generated \$15.3 billion in direct revenue. In 2020 they generated less than \$3 billion in revenue and at the end of 2021 these family-owned businesses continued to operate at less than 50 percent of pre-pandemic levels.

Prior to the pandemic, private school bus operators generated \$10 billion in annual direct revenue. In 2020 they had a loss of \$4 billion and operators estimate an additional \$4 billion in losses in 2021 with most schools remaining closed until the fall of 2021. The industry estimates it lost 28,000 drivers during the pandemic that never came back, exacerbating an already trying driver shortage.

As for passenger vessel companies, the initial CERTS Act grants replaced only 20-25% of the year 2020 company shortfalls but nevertheless were critical to preserving these companies. Most vessel members of the Passenger Vessel Association continue to operate at dramatically reduced levels compared to 2019, and their financial health has not yet been restored.

Now, more than ever, our industries need additional assistance from Congress, and we are writing you today to ask that you please work with Chairman Cardin and Senator Wicker to find a bipartisan path forward that ensures relief for our struggling businesses so that in turn we can continue providing critical transportation services to the public, including rural and low-income communities, school children, and millions of workers across the country.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please be in touch with any questions.

Sincerely,

American Bus Association

Passenger Vessel Association

U.S. Tire Manufacturers Association

Transportation Division – International
Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and
Transportation Workers (SMART)

Eastern States Joint Board – AFL-CIO, Local 222, 298

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

United Motorcoach Association

National School Transportation
Association

Amalgamated Transit Union

Transportation Workers Union of America

Local 108, Retail, Wholesale and
Department Store Union