

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**

June 11, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Esper  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Pompeo, Secretary Esper, and Secretary Chao:

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of American mariners have been given no choice but to stay on their vessels. Many of these merchant seamen are now trapped on ships or in foreign ports with no ability to get back to the United States. This is unacceptable and we write to urge you to take immediate action to bring these Americans home as soon as possible.

American merchant seamen play a crucial role in the global supply chain. They also supply our troops overseas and deliver important government cargoes, including essential foreign aid. Before the pandemic, many of them traveled by air each month to and from ships located in ports all over the world. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has left many stranded with no way of returning home to their families and communities.

We have heard credible reports of mariners being restricted aboard their vessels for months past their normal terms of employment, with some aboard for more than eleven months without shore leave or relief. These restrictions and communications issues have understandably caused these Americans great anxiety about their families back home. In addition to the dangers regularly experienced aboard these vessels, these seamen must also now contend with the potential for a devastating COVID-19 outbreak in the close confines of their vessels.

There are currently four U.S.-flag container vessels operating between various ports in the Mediterranean, Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. These ships have not been able to relieve or repatriate their crews, despite moving between the ports of multiple allied nations. Again, we urgently request your assistance in bringing these Americans home to their families as quickly as possible. We also ask that foreign seafarers who are facing similar circumstances here in the United States receive repatriation assistance.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

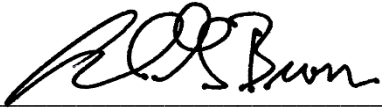
Sincerely,



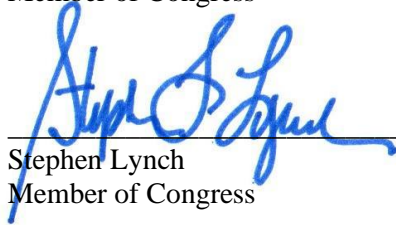
Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress



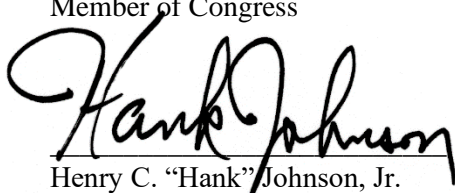
Stephen Lynch  
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress



John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress