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September 9, 2016

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Honorable Paul Jaenichen
Administrator
U.S. Maritime Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Admiral Jim Helis
Superintendent
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy
300 Steamboat Road
Kings Point, NY 11024

Dear Secretary Foxx, Administrator Jaenichen, and Admiral Helis:

We write today deeply concerned about the "Stand Down" order regarding the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy's (USMMA) Sea Year program. We are also concerned that an external review by the Middle States Commission of High Education found that USMMA failed to comply with education standards to the point where its accreditation is threatened. The inadequacies listed by the commission include a lack of institutional planning, budgeting, and administrative staff qualification. These deficiencies raise serious concerns regarding the leadership at the USMMA.

The Sea Year Stand Down order was based on reports of bullying, coercion, and sexual harassment. The safety and well-being of the midshipmen is our utmost priority, and any reports alleging sexual harassment during the Sea Year program or on campus must be taken seriously and immediately addressed. We seek to work with those involved in the USMMA to ensure that steps are taken to ensure the safety, trust, and respect are built on campus and during Sea Year.

A recent press release from the USMMA dated August 22, 2016 stated that the Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration (MARAD), and the USMMA made consistent efforts to solve issues regarding incidents of bullying, coercion, and sexual harassment. Yet these issues were not solved, and the decision was made to suspend Sea Year. Please provide us with details that specify exactly what efforts were made over the last five years and why they were not adequate to address the issues. Another area of great concern is the lack of reporting of sexual harassment. Please describe what actions are being taken to ensure individuals feel safe to report the incidents and that these incidents are accurately recorded. Moreover, please provide us with a

description about the actions being pursued to ensure that all of the USMMA accreditation issues are fully addressed.

Additionally, the aforementioned press release stated that independent outside experts are being brought in to examine aspects within USMMA. If these issues have been ongoing over the last few years, why were these experts not brought in earlier and before it was deemed necessary to suspend Sea Year? Once again, the delay in addressing well documented problems raises questions regarding failures in leadership at both MARAD and the USMMA.

Sea Year is an important component to the curriculum of the Academy, and we want to ensure that this important training can safely resume for midshipmen. Additionally, we need to confirm that the graduation and therefore the careers of these midshipmen are not irrevocably jeopardized. We understand that the USMMA has taken steps to assign midshipmen to federal vessels, but we are concerned that they are not receiving an adequate level of training. Can you please detail how these midshipmen will have enough sea days to graduate on time? Also, what is being done to ensure that the midshipmen receive the best hands on training on these federal vessels?

The significant concerns we raise must be addressed by the USMMA and MARAD. We look forward to working with all those involved in the USMMA to ensure that the midshipmen get the best education possible.

Sincerely,



Scott Garrett
Member of Congress



Leonard Lance
Member of Congress



Frank LoBiondo
Member of Congress



Tom MacArthur
Member of Congress