

From: ally@womenoffshore.org,

To: DOTExecSec@dot.gov, polly.trottenberg@dot.gov, lucinda.lessley@dot.gov, buonoj@usmma.edu,

Cc: jonesi@usmma.edu, shashi.kumar@dot.gov, DunlapS@usmma.edu,

Subject: Letter from USMMA Female Midshipmen

Date: Thu, Sep 30, 2021 6:57 pm

Attachments: USMMA KPL Letter .pdf (1551K)

Dear Secretary Buttigieg, Deputy Secretary Trottenberg, Administrator Lessley, and Superintendent Buono,

My name is Ally Cedeno. I am a licensed merchant mariner and the president of the Women Offshore Foundation, an advocacy organization for women in the maritime industry.

I received a letter today signed by an impressive group of female midshipmen at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy who are very concerned about rumors that their training on commercial ships is about to be canceled. They are looking for my help. This type of assistance is not something I can do personally, but I share their opinion about the significance of sea year on commercial ships, the high value those ships bring to their training, and the strides the industry has made in making their vessels a safe place to work and learn.

I work daily with women in the industry, both cadets and professionals. Canceling sea year on commercial ships would be a huge set-back for these women and would unfortunately compound the issue by failing to recognize the herculean efforts the industry has made to improve.

No one can say their organization is perfect. But I can say that the industry has really stepped up to the plate to make things better. This letter shows that. And I have first hand knowledge.

Please read the attached and know that I, and the thousands of women I support, share these opinions.

Sincerely,

Ally

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Ally Cedeno, Founder & President
WOMEN OFFSHORE FOUNDATION
A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization
Let's Reduce the Gender Gap Together
womenoffshore.org

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Dear Ally,

Thank you for being an advocate for women at sea. Our organization, Kappa Pi Lambda (Kings Point Ladies club) has a membership of over 100 USMMA female Midshipmen who are committed to the Academy and to our future as professional mariners and naval reserve officers.

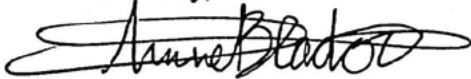
We have read an internet account of an awful assault a female midshipman experienced during Sea Year training. We also heard a rumor that leadership is considering a Sea Year stand down and removing USMMA cadets from training on commercial vessels. If true, this dramatic, un-researched action would **un-do four decades of progress for women at sea**. These are the very vessels that we will be working on when we graduate. These vessels have successfully had female cadets and graduates working and learning on them for over 40 years.

While nowhere in the world can be called completely safe, the commercial ship training environment is a professional one, and much has been accomplished by the Academy and industry in making it even more so. We have witnessed culture change even in the four years we have been at USMMA and in training at sea. **Perpetrators must be held accountable, but not at the expense of the irreplaceable, mission-critical training we receive on commercial vessels.** Cadets from USMMA as well as the state maritime academies also train on government ships, on military ships and on training ships and all of these vessels have had exactly the same issues. But progress is being made and the commitment by the commercial shipping companies in particular is notable and has not gone unnoticed by us.

As female members of the USMMA Regiment, we strongly and passionately urge that leadership not take such a devastating step which will have far-reaching negative impacts to our training.

Additional improvements are always possible, but we respectfully request that leadership please ask those directly impacted – the USMMA female midshipmen and the women in organizations like yours – what those changes should look like instead of silencing us and removing us from what we strongly believe are the best training platforms for us.

Sincerely,



Midshipman Anne E. Bladow I/C
Kappa Pi Lambda (Kings Point Ladies) Club President
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy
Class of 2022
anniebladow@gmail.com

Julia Dahlke KP '22 Cara Beberg KP '22 Shannon B. Lee 2022
Carolee M. Adamson KP '22 Kaitlyn Fiske KP '22 Madison Reddick '22
Clarice Adams KP '22 Hannah Taylor 2022 2022
Chyann KP '22 Bunn & A KP '22 Alex Massey 2022
Amanda Zeon KP '22 Alyssa KP '22 Ven Puz KP 2023
Kathleen Burr KP '22 Amelia Clark KP '23 ~~_____~~ KP 2023