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June 25, 2020

Hon. Mitch McConnell
Leader
United States Senate

Hon. Charles Schumer Majority
Minority Leader
United States Senate

Hon. Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

Hon. Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

RE: “HEROES ACT” Longshore and Harbor Workers Compensation Act

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

The Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO and the undersigned labor unions represent tens of thousands of shipbuilder's, shipbreakers, harbor construction workers, longshore workers, and other essential port and maritime workers. We build, maintain and operate the ships and facilities that provide our nations supply chain and national defense. We are the American workforce that continues to perform their duties diligently and with distinction, regardless of risk or exposure to COVID-19, ensuring that food and medical supplies are unloaded and delivered to combat this heinous virus.

Unfortunately, a number of our nation's essential maritime employees have already passed away from COVID 19. Many more in the maritime and its related workforces have been hospitalized due to coronavirus illnesses and now face long term consequences to their health and family finances.

We strongly support the changes in the Longshore and Harbor Workers Compensation Act embodied in the “Heroes Act” passed by the House of Representatives on May 15, 2020. The Act, in separate sections, creates a presumption of causation of workplace illness arising from virus exposure for certain federal workers and for workers covered under the Longshore and Harbor Worker's Compensation Act. It is imperative that maritime industry “Heroes” receive the temporary or permanent disability benefits provided by the Act, as well as reasonable medical expenses and death benefits. The legislation does not blame employers or insurance carriers for the pandemic. The only legislative requirement of employers is that they comply with applicable safety and health regulations. Employer experience ratings or premiums will not be affected, as

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“HEROES ACT”
Longshore and Harbor Workers
Compensation Act

insurance carriers are provided relief through the legislation that allows them to recoup losses for COVID-19 related expenses.

This provision among many contained in the “Heroes Act” is an important next step in our country’s response to the COVID-19 crisis, providing compensation and critical health and safety protections for workers. The affiliates of the Metal Trades Department, and their partners in the labor movement, strongly urge the Senate to adopt the Longshore and Harbor Workers Compensation Act provision(s) in the House of Representatives Heroes Act.

As you begin to complete your work on the next round of stimulus and worker protection legislation, the undersigned organizations urge you to enact bipartisan policy provisions that will guarantee the health and safety of all American workers.

Sincerely,

Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO

AFL-CIO

Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Federal Workers Alliance

International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers

International Brotherhood of Boilermakers

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers

International Longshoremen's Association

International Longshore and Warehouse Union

International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots

National Association of Government Employees-SEIU

National Federation of Federal Employees

Operative Plasterers' & Cement Masons' International Association

Laborers' International Union of North America