

## **Chris Spear – Opening Remarks 5.11.21**

### **Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, Maritime, Freight, and Ports**

#### **[Freight Mobility: Strengthening America's Supply Chains and Competitiveness](#)**

Chairman Peters, ranking member Fischer and members of this subcommittee, on behalf of the more than 34,000 members of the American Trucking Associations, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

ATA is an 87-year-old federation of 50 state trucking associations and the largest, most diverse national trade association representing the trucking industry. Trucking now employs 7.8 million Americans in every state and Congressional district, including 3.6 million truck drivers. That's 1 in 16 jobs in the United States, where the top job in 29 states is a truck driver. And despite commercial vehicles being only 4 percent of the vehicles on our nation's highways, the trucking industry moves more than 71% of the nation's freight tonnage and pays nearly half of the tab into the federal Highway Trust Fund. Today, more than 80 percent of US communities rely exclusively on trucks for their freight transportation needs.

Coming into the global pandemic, trucks moved \$10.4 trillion worth of goods annually... more than half of US gross domestic product. And despite a chronic and growing shortage of drivers, our industry and our intermodal partners here today, are the glue that kept this economy together these last 14 months. Despite near-biblical accounts of empty store shelves, we never ran out of milk, eggs, toilet paper... or even fuel. There was plenty in the supply chain and always a hard-working, patriotic driver to make sure those same shelves got restocked.

America's supply chain yields tremendous potential. It's a catalyst for economic growth, beyond that of any other nation. For that to happen, however, I ask this committee to consider four key elements that both feed and benefit our nation's supply chain: infrastructure, safety, workforce development and environmental stewardship. Together, these elements shape and define the resiliency of our supply chain. Those of us testifying here today have no problem identifying issues of difference, but there is no argument between any of us that our dependency on one another is what allows the supply chain to withstand the pressures of a global pandemic.

In fact, no pandemic, hurricane, flood, fire... no tariff, no tweet, or senseless partisan bickering is going to keep our industry from doing its job. But we are here today to ask that you do yours. Investments in our supply chain are desperately needed, including the roads and bridges that connect our ports, rail yards, airports to the National Highway System. Do that... and you will witness measurable efficiencies, including gains in productivity and safety, job growth and sustainable employment, and historic reductions in carbon emissions.

Infrastructure is NOT partisan. If anyone in Congress believes that roads and bridges are political, you haven't been driving on them. But they are in desperate need of your leadership and support. In just the last year, Congress spent \$6 trillion in response to the pandemic, of which \$4 trillion was passed with bipartisan support. Reasons aside, this was an unprecedented level of spending our country has never witnessed – not ever. And not one cent of it was paid for. Yet, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the federal Highway Trust Fund will be bankrupt... flat broke... next summer. The good news for Congress is that it can and should be paid for... by users... all of them, including truckers.

However you craft legislation, please consider the written testimony provided to you today. And understand that if these investments are indeed made, you have the opportunity to go home before your constituents and point and say... that road... that bridge... that railroad, port, waterway, airport... I did that. I helped make that happen. In other words, stop blaming each other for the things you don't do and start taking credit for the things you should do. These investments are long overdue. They are the things Americans – your constituents – need, use and rely on every single day. They'll be grateful. And I guarantee you that the nearly 8 million people that make up the trucking industry will be, too.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.