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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
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COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3806

July 2, 2019

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on
Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on
Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

On the heels of Infrastructure Week, I am hopeful that we, the 116th Congress, will address the various infrastructure challenges facing not only my community in Pennsylvania's 6th Congressional District (PA-06), but also communities across our Nation. Ensuring that our infrastructure is safe, reliable, and sustainable should be an effort we can all coalesce around.

Every Pennsylvanian, and, for that matter, every American, should have an efficient and environmentally low-impact means of getting to work, to school, and to the doctor's office. When traveling, they should not have to worry about the safety of road, rail, or air travel. Port authorities, which are critical to our economy and jobs in our communities, should spend less time worrying about staying afloat and more time growing their operations and efficacies. Access to transportation is also important for communities like mine, where the rising cost of living and limited affordable housing options require people to commute for work into our district.

Without Congressional leadership to stimulate investment in infrastructure, Americans will face greater health risks, environmental impacts, and financial losses. According to the Congressional Budget Office, there was a nearly 20 percent *decrease* in federal spending on infrastructure between 2003 and 2017. This shows. My state contains the ninth largest inventory of highway bridges in the country and, according to the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, in my community alone, there are hundreds of structurally deficient bridges, including the PA Turnpike where it crosses Conestoga Road (401) in Chester Springs. This bridge sees over 45,000 commuters every weekday.

In my community, employers like Pepperidge Farm have shared with me that they have had to alter travel routes and load amounts due to poor road and bridge conditions. For example, in the past they have only loaded their trucks half way because bridges would not support a full load's

weight. This resulted in more trips, which meant longer drive times for their workers, more wear-and-tear on their trucks, and more pollution in our community.

In light of the current bipartisan interest in addressing the Nation's infrastructure challenges, we must collectively prioritize the development and implementation of a comprehensive infrastructure plan that includes long-term funding for our Nation's roads, bridges, and transit systems.

As Congress, and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure specifically, considers investment in and improvement to our Nation's transportation systems, mass transit must be central to the conversation. Pennsylvania is home to the fifth largest rail network in our country. My community is home to SEPTA's Paoli/Thorndale Line – a 35-mile corridor from Chester County to Center City, Philadelphia, which like many in our area, I ride each week. Yet, according to Census data, only 2.7 percent of PA-06 residents take advantage of our mass transit options. Mass transit is environmentally responsible and creates jobs, but degrading infrastructure and unpredictability in scheduling means it is underutilized in my community. We must ensure improvements to our mass transit systems remain a part of the infrastructure conversation.

However, the majority of those in PA-06, *79 percent* of commuters, opt to drive for their commute and have a mean travel time of nearly 30 minutes. With this in mind, it is especially important to my community that Congress restore the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) to rebuild and modernize our surface transportation infrastructure. As we address the solvency of the HTF, I know many of my colleagues have cited a need to increase the gas tax as a way to augment Federal funding for infrastructure. However, as we rightfully continue to encourage more and more people to drive electric vehicles, the increase in the gas tax will be less and less impactful.

Further, I am concerned that the financial burden of increases to the gas tax will be disproportionately borne by those most struggling to make ends meet. Data shows that the people with the longest commutes are more likely to be lower income earners. As Congress considers increasing the gas tax, I hope the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure considers this tension: we need to improve the solvency of the HTF, but not at the expense of our most vulnerable. I look forward to working together to identify innovative ways to address this complex issue.

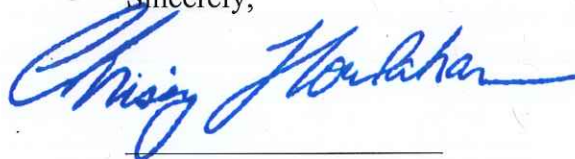
Congress must also address the Nation's aging water and wastewater infrastructure and local water quality challenges. In Pennsylvania alone, public water systems are projected to have a \$10.2 billion funding gap over the next 10 years. By funding programs such as the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and expanding public-private partnerships for drinking water and wastewater projects, we can ensure that our communities have the resources they need to live healthier lives. Additionally, investment in clean water and wastewater infrastructure will create thousands of new jobs in the construction and wastewater sectors and promote energy and water efficiency.

In my community, residents are justifiably concerned about the risk that the Mariner pipelines pose to the health and safety of their families. It is imperative that we find environmentally sound, resilient, and transparent ways to modernize and improve our infrastructure. I also urge the Committee to explore ways to improve community engagement and transparency – especially with respect to emergency contingency planning – between pipeline operators and the communities through which the pipelines run.

Finally, even with an influx of funding and a plan to address our Nation's crumbling infrastructure, we will be incapable of making progress without a workforce equipped with the skills necessary to carry it out. Therefore, with any infrastructure plan, I ask the Committee to support legislation that supports relevant training opportunities and support services to help workers succeed in the infrastructure industry.

By embracing modern infrastructure solutions that are sustainable and innovative, we can both address the challenge of our Nation's aging infrastructure, as well as create jobs and boost our economy. Thank you for your continued leadership on these matters. I look forward to working with the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to pass bipartisan legislation that addresses the needs of my community and our Nation.

Sincerely,



CHRISSY HOULAHAN
Member of Congress