

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 17, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing in strong support of the Maine Department of Transportation's (MaineDOT) application for funding through the Ferry Service for Rural Communities Program. The Maine State Ferry Service (MSFS), under the direction of MaineDOT, provides public transportation to the rural island communities of Frenchboro, Islesboro, Matinicus, North Haven, Swan's Island, and Vinalhaven. These remote, rural communities depend on reliable, affordable, and sustainable ferry service for access to jobs, education and services, as well as for emergency medical transports.

MaineDOT, through their application, is requesting \$10 million to assist with operational costs of the MSFS. Like many transportation industries over the past couple of years the MSFS has experienced some challenges. Operating costs have increased due to the spike in fuel prices, increased vessel repair and maintenance needs of an aging fleet, and increased overtime due to staffing shortages influenced by the global maritime workforce shortage and compounded by COVID-19. These challenges have led to missed trips, often with cancelations at last minute.

This funding will support new efforts aimed at recruiting and retaining vessel crews, including training opportunities and a new bonus and stipend program. These efforts are imperative to maintaining a consistent reliable ferry service to the six island communities that rely on it. The funding will also help to relieve the impact of increased operating costs and improve communication to customers through implementation of a new communication system.

Thank you for your time on behalf of MaineDOT's application for the Rural Communities Program. I encourage you to please carefully consider their proposal, subject to all applicable laws and regulations, and ask that you please notify Adam Lachman in my office at (202) 224-5344 when a final decision has been made.

Sincerely,



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator