The Honorable Elaine Chao  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20590  

March 1, 2017  

Dear Secretary Chao:  

Congratulations on your new role as Secretary of Transportation. The Agriculture Transportation Coalition has previously engaged with you in your roles at the Department of Labor, Department of Transportation, and Federal Maritime Commission, and we look forward to working with you further in your new capacity.  

An enormous challenge in transportation for all agriculture commodities is the current truck weight limits on Interstate highways. We'd like to work with your agency to modernize these outdated regulations and increase allowable limits for U.S. agriculture, forest products, and other commodity exporters.  

In fiscal year 2016, the American agriculture industry exported $129 billion worth of goods. These products are grown, raised, processed, packaged and shipped from all regions of the U.S. on our highways to our land and sea ports, and then on to markets worldwide. Domestic transportation efficiency plays a critical role in determining the cost and thus competitiveness of our U.S. exports in foreign markets.  

A major challenge for all U.S. agriculture exporters is the 1982 Federal law limiting truck weights on Interstate Highways to 80,000 pounds gross vehicle weight, and the 1991 Federal law freezing weights for longer combination vehicles. Although there are some exceptions, exporters still face significant constraints when using Interstate highways to move their products to the closest seaport or rail ramp. Agriculture exports shipped in ocean containers such as hay, frozen meat protein, soybeans, and forest products, often “weigh out” and exceed truck weight limits before storage capacity is reached inside the container.  

Additionally, agriculture exporters in other countries have long had access to truck transportation at heavier gross weights than are generally available here in the U.S, disadvantaging our U.S. exporters.  

**We support safe and efficient truck weight limit modernization**, whereby the gross vehicle weight is increased on Interstate routes and at critical connector routes at land and sea ports provided that the heavy weight truck configuration meets specific criteria. For example, heavier
trucks with additional axles have better braking power and improved weight distribution, which limits road wear and improves safety. There are also fuel savings and emission reductions.

We are eager to meet with you to discuss a safe and responsible way forward on this important issue. We need to make U.S. agriculture exporters more competitive now.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Agriculture Transportation Coalition
Agropur
Allied Potato, Inc.
Almond Alliance of California
American Feed Industry Association (AFIA)
American Frozen Food Institute
Border Valley Trading
Borges of California
Capay Canyon Ranch
Carriere Family Farms
Dairy Farmers of America
EFI Logistics
El Toro Export LLC
Fornazor International, Inc.
Gold Dust Potato Processors, Inc.
Grocery Manufacturers Association
Indiana Packers Corporation
International Express, LLC
J&W Walker Farms, Inc.
Johnsonville Sausage, LLC
MacMillan-Piper, Inc.
Midwest Shippers Association
National Beef
National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA)
National Frozen Foods Corporation
National Onion Association
National Pork Producers Council