

Renee Amar
Director, Small Business
Louisiana Association of Business and Industry
November 16, 2018
Port of New Orleans

TESTIMONY SENATOR JOHN KENNEDY

Senator Kennedy on behalf of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, thank you for inviting the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry to testify today at this hearing, "How Small Businesses Benefit from Smart Rail Shipping Regulation." Hopefully, once this hearing is completed, all the parties involved can come to a reasonable and timely solution for this smart rail shipping regulation that is safe, reliable and affordable for the small business community.

My name is Renee Amar, I am the Director of Small Business for the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, also known as LABI. LABI is the state's Chamber of Commerce and state's manufacturing association. We work very closely with the National Association of Manufacturers and the United States Chamber of Commerce. LABI is the state's largest business organization, and a voice for the principles of free enterprise in Louisiana. We represent the views and interests of the Louisiana business community in the political, legislative, judicial and regulatory processes.

LABI currently has 2,400 members representing more than 320,000 employees and of those 2,400 members, more than 70% are small business owners and that is defined as having under 100 employees. These are your farmers, retailers both grocery and clothing, and small manufacturers that all rely on rail as a form of shipping for them.

Specifically, as the Small Business Council Director, my job is to advance ideas that help the free market grow in Louisiana which in turn, allows small business owners to compete in a healthy

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environment. We understand the vital role that the small business community plays in Louisiana's economy and equally understand that the growth of the economy in Louisiana will greatly depend on maintaining a healthy industrial base, coupled with a thriving small business community. Also, having cost effective shipping options is a vitally important piece of the puzzle for running a successful small business of any type.

It is clear then that when rail is healthy, profitable and productive, that's good news for all of us – and of course – that's good news for small businesses. And, that goes for every sector and every small business as they are consumers in general and benefit from the savings and improved service generated by a competitive, innovative transportation sector.

Looking ahead, it is important that the best policy environment be established to incentivize the entrepreneurship, investment and innovation that drive growth across the economy, including when it comes to transportation. Any relapse into over-regulation, in turn, would generate negatives, such as higher costs and reduced service, for the small businesses in the broader railroad sector, in sectors serving railroads, and in the many sectors served by railroads – and of course, for consumers in general.

Pointing to the issue of rail and regulation, after much has been said and done, both sides of rail and industry have come together and reached common ground and we believe that this is the best conclusion to come to as it works for the rail companies, works for industry and ultimately, the consumer. The consumer benefits from years of railroad deregulation and not over-

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regulation to the tune of billions of dollars that came from lower priced goods resulting from lower transportation costs.

In conclusion, we always have cautioned and always will caution that when government does issue regulation because there truly is a safety or health concern, it should be done with the business owners input and with the lightest touch from government as humanly possible.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today.