December 16, 2021

Dear Midshipmen:

We are pleased to report that yesterday, we submitted the plan to lift the Sea Year pause to Members of Congress. With the implementation of this plan, Sea Year assignments will resume on December 22. Initial cadet embarkations will be on Federal vessels and training vessels. Embarkations on commercial vessels will resume as operators enroll in the EMBARC program (described below) and affirm their compliance with the program's new safety requirements. Assignments will be made over the coming weeks and you will receive additional details about planned embarkations from Academy personnel shortly.

Our plan has two parts. The first part enumerates safety measures that commercial carriers will be required to implement under a new program called the "Every Mariner Builds a Respectful Culture" (EMBARC) program, which will replace the prior SCCT program. These safety measures include such things as increasing training requirements for crewmembers, requiring vessel operating companies to appoint SASH contacts for cadets, and requiring the adoption of policies prohibiting cadets and crewmembers from being in each other's staterooms.

Critically, the leaders of the six State Maritime Academies—Maine Maritime Academy, Great Lakes Maritime Academy, State University of New York Maritime College, California State University Maritime Academy, Massachusetts Maritime Academy, and Texas A&M Maritime Academy—have written to us indicating that they support EMBARC. In their letter, they stated:

> "We fully support the Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH) Prevention Mandatory Minimum Standards articulated in the *Every Mariner Builds a Respectful Culture* (EMBARC standards) for U.S. flag SOLAS vessels engaged in international trade. We believe these standards will help ensure a safe and healthy work environment for our cadets onboard these vessels."

The second component of the plan enumerates new policies and procedures that will be implemented at USMMA to support the EMBARC program and increase the support provided to cadets while they are at sea. Among other new policies and procedures, USMMA will provide each cadet embarked at sea with a satellite phone that enables them to have voice communications with family and friends, as well as Academy personnel and other support resources. In addition, USMMA has implemented a new amnesty policy that ensures survivors who report sexual assault—as well as intervening bystanders and witnesses—will not be subject to discipline for misconduct occurring at or near the time of the commission of the assault. The Academy is also revising its Sea Year Guide as well as other policy documents that govern Sea Year sailings.

Finally, we emphasize that we recognize that this two-part plan is just the first step in what will be a long-term process to make continuous improvements—both in the EMBARC program and in USMMA policies and procedures. The EMBARC plan and Academy policies will be reviewed—including with the assistance of internal and external experts—and revised regularly to incorporate emerging best practices, to address lessons learned during implementation, and to better support a culture of respect and accountability on campus and at sea.

We deeply appreciate the many thoughtful recommendations—and expressions of support—we have received from you and from all stakeholders as we have worked to review existing policies and procedures and develop this plan. We will continue to seek your recommendations and your feedback on how new policies and procedures are working—and we encourage you to continue to share your observations. We remain laser-focused on protecting your safety and the safety of all mariners, and providing unwavering support to the survivors of sexual assault and harassment.

Sincerely,

Polly Trottenberg
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department
of Transportation
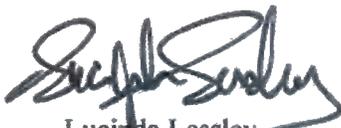
Lucinda Lessley
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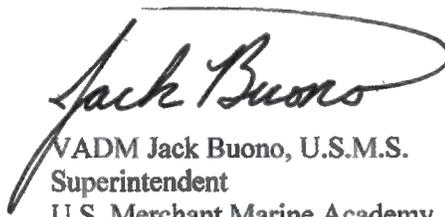
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