

COVID-19 Emergency Relief

Federal Policy

Background:

Florida seaports are one of the state's greatest economic assets, positively affecting every region and every resident. Whether moving over a hundred million tons of cargo annually or millions of U.S. and international cruise passengers, Florida's seaports generate and support a vast array of commerce. These seaports are the gateway for shipment of goods into and out of Florida and link our state to vital international markets. Our seaports have a \$117.6 billion economic impact on the state and account for more than 900,000 direct and indirect jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic economic impact on Florida, including seaport operations. Total negative economic impacts at Florida seaports include the potential loss of almost \$700 million in direct spending, a loss of more than 40,000 Florida jobs and \$620 million in earned wages by maritime businesses.

Current Issue:

The fiscal constraints of the COVID-19 Pandemic have affected seaports ability to conduct normal cargo and passenger operations. Initial operational and material costs to ensure that maritime workers and citizens are protected from COVID-19 are more than \$12 million. Anticipated additional costs that may be necessary to recover and resume operations that ensure that cargo and passenger operations meet federal and state COVID-19 guidelines exceed \$15 million. Projected lost revenue to seaports, as well as to federal, state, and local governments, from the impacts of COVID-19 on cargo and passenger operations are more than \$330 million through December 2020. Other fiscal concerns include the ability of seaports to meet more than \$100 million in annual debt service payments.

As noted by House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee leadership, seaports and the maritime sector have not been afforded the same protections and relief given to other industries during COVID-19. There is a huge gap in current federal emergency assistance that has left links in the maritime supply chain isolated and unable to access other assistance programs available to other industries.

Recommendations:

Congress is currently discussing another round of COVID-19 assistance. The Florida Ports Council urges the support of critical emergency relief for U.S. seaports. This emergency relief legislation could include:

\$1.5 billion specifically for seaports in the next COVID-19 legislation to cover business-critical expenses and ensure that U.S. seaports maintain a state of readiness and sustain the critical responsibility in the supply chains that provide jobs, food, medical equipment, and other essential goods for U.S. citizens.

\$3.5 billion for the Maritime Transportation System Emergency Relief Act (MTSERA) to provide financial assistance to U.S. seaports and other maritime businesses to stabilize and ensure the reliable functioning of the U.S. Maritime Transportation System.

Amend the CARES Act to broaden the authority of governors to provide CARES Act funds that were appropriated in that ACT directly to ports in their respective states.