

**Testimony of John Drake**  
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**Before the Pennsylvania House Transportation Committee**  
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Chairman Hennessey, Democratic Chairman Carroll, and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the important role of truck drivers to our economy. My name is John Drake and I am the vice president for supply chain policy for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business organization representing companies of all sizes across every sector of the economy. Our members range from small businesses and local chambers of commerce to leading industry associations and large corporations who all count on the U.S. Chamber to be their voice in Washington, across the country, and around the world. For more than 100 years, we have advocated for pro-business policies that help businesses create jobs and grow our economy.

Today, supply chain challenges are the top of mind for many Americans. The supply chain challenges confronting our West Coast ports is leading to very real challenges across our economy – including here in Pennsylvania. Manufacturers are closing factories for weeks at a time due to shortages. Construction firms are struggling to find building materials. Retailers are warning that hoped-for gifts may not arrive in time for the holidays. The global supply chain crisis is here, and it is threatening America's economic recovery. It is fueling rising inflation – lifting prices for families and businesses alike.

Solving this crisis is not easy. It requires careful coordination between every link of the global supply chain, including manufacturers, retailers, ocean carriers, railroads, truckers, ports, warehouses, and more. Further, solving this crisis will take time. There are a lot of issues that led to this current crisis and it will take time for solutions to take hold. But, like the members of this Committee, the Chamber is focused on helping solve this crisis and using this crisis as an opportunity to address some of the underlying issues that made it a reality.

One of those issues is the truck driver shortage, so I applaud the Committee for focusing today's hearing on this issue. It is hard to understate the importance of the trucking industry to our economy. Indeed, seventy percent of freight in the U.S. moves by truck. But the trucking industry has not been spared by the supply chain crisis and perhaps its number one challenge right now is a driver shortage.

The trucking industry is not alone in this challenge. Across the economy, our nation has too many people without jobs, too many jobs without people to fill them, and as a result, too many businesses

can't grow, compete, and thrive. These problems are affecting almost every business, in every sector, in every state – including the trucking industry. While they predate the pandemic, these challenges have become even greater and more urgent over the past year – and it poses a threat to our fragile recovery. Getting people back on the job is crucial to business growth. A U.S. Chamber poll taken this summer found that nearly half (49%) of Americans who lost their job during the pandemic are not active at all or not very active in searching for new employment. Factors contributing to unemployed Americans not looking for work include unemployment benefits (16%), childcare and other family care needs (24%), a lack of available jobs due in sectors that are still suffering (28%), and COVID-19 concerns (26%). Nearly one in four respondents (23%) of the survey said they lack the skills or experience necessary for most of the jobs available right now. (Source: [\*The Covid-19 Unemployed\*](#)).

So, while the trucking industry is not alone in a *worker* shortage, there are additional, industry specific issues contributing to the *driver* shortage. These specific factors contributing to the truck driver shortage include:

- High average age of current drivers, which leads to a higher number of retirements than other industries.
- Women making up only 7% of all drivers, well below their representation in the total workforce.
- Inability of some would-be and current drivers to pass a drug test, a problem exacerbated by an increasing number of states legalizing marijuana (a substance still banned federally).
- The federally mandated minimum age of 21 to drive commercially across state lines poses a significant challenge to recruiting new drivers.
- The pandemic caused some drivers to leave the industry, plus truck driver training schools trained far fewer drivers than normal in 2020.
- Lifestyle issues, notably time away from home, especially in the long-haul market.
- Infrastructure and other issues, like a lack of truck parking spots, which causes drivers to stop driving earlier than they need to so they can get a spot for the night, and congestion which limits drivers' ability to safely and efficiently make deliveries.

The fact of the matter is the industry was facing a driver shortage before the pandemic, but today the American Trucking Associations reports the shortage exceeds 80,000 – an all-time high for the industry. All sectors of the trucking industry are struggling to find enough drivers, with the most acute driver shortages being felt in the long-haul segment of the for-hire truckload market.

While the industry was hiring prior to the pandemic, the biggest issue today is that the industry can't keep up with skyrocketing demand for goods. Adding to the challenge: the American Trucking Associations estimates that the industry will need to hire nearly one million new drivers over the next decade to close the gap caused by demand for freight, projected retirements, and other issues.

There are opportunities to address many of these challenges in the coming years. The U.S. Chamber is working closely with the American Trucking Associations and other organizations – along with policy makers in Washington and across the country because this driver shortage must be addressed.

And the good news is that today there are very good reasons to be a truck driver. In response to the current shortage, major trucking companies are raising pay to recruit and retain drivers. Data from the Department of Labor shows that average annual earnings of drivers in the long-haul for-hire trucking industry is increasing roughly five times the historical average. Additionally, truck driving is one of the few jobs that can provide a middle class living without a college degree.

The importance of the trucking industry cannot be understated. But there are real challenges and opportunities facing the industry and these challenges must be confronted because trucking is essential to commerce, our economy, and people's standard of living. Further, supporting this industry will go a long way towards helping address the current supply chain crisis and helping protect our supply chains from future interruptions to moving goods.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.