

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Governor Jared Polis,
Chair
National Governors Association
444 North Capitol Street, Suite 267
Washington, D.C. 20001

Lt. Gen. William H. “Butch” Graham, Jr.
Chief of Engineers and Commanding General
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
2600 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Secretary Duffy, Lieutenant General Graham, and Governor Polis,

Just one year ago, the Baltimore region experienced a devastating tragedy that claimed the lives of six individuals and disrupted countless livelihoods when the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed after a vessel strike. The cost to rebuild the bridge is expected to near \$2 billion and take at least three years for construction. We have since learned there are dozens of bridges across the country under state jurisdiction that lack recommended safety assessments. We write to express our deep concern.

To avoid another tragedy of this magnitude, we must take urgent action to address vulnerabilities that could lead to another catastrophic bridge failure or collapse. The Key Bridge disaster was not an isolated incident – it was a warning.

After a thorough investigation following the Key Bridge collapse, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued a preliminary report titled: “*Safeguarding Bridges from Vessel Strikes: Need for Vulnerability Assessment and Risk Reduction Strategies*.”¹² While vessel operators are ultimately responsible for avoiding collisions, the report includes recommendations essential to protecting lives, bridge infrastructure, and the economic well-being of communities across the country. NTSB’s recommendations are more than technical guidelines, they are life-saving measures.

For nearly three decades, the Federal Highway Administration has required new bridges adhere to the guidelines established by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) to minimize the risk of a catastrophic collapse from a vessel collision, considering the size, speed, and other characteristics of vessels navigating the surrounding waterways. Bridges built prior to 1994 were not required to complete vulnerability assessments, as was the case for the Key Bridge. The NTSB noted that the Key Bridge, which opened in 1977, was nearly 30 times greater than today’s acceptable AASHTO risk threshold. The report also identified 67 other bridges across 19 states that still lack the vulnerability assessments needed to determine their risk. One of those additional bridges is the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, which the State of Maryland has recently committed to evaluating based on AASHTO safety guidelines.

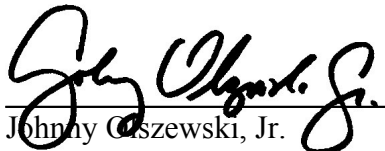
¹ National Transportation Safety Board. *Safeguarding Bridges from Vessel Strikes: Need for Vulnerability Assessment and Risk Reduction Strategies*. 18 Mar. 2025.

As leaders, we have a responsibility to prevent history from repeating itself. We urgently and respectfully request the expeditious adoption of the recommendations outlined by NTSB in its preliminary report. Specifically, we call on the 18 other states and Army Corps of Engineers with jurisdiction over the 66 bridges across the country that currently lack a vulnerability study to undergo such an evaluation as quickly as possible.


As Members of Congress, we stand ready to work hand in hand with you, aiming to provide the resources needed in each state and localities to bring our bridges up to safety standards. This is a moment to lead with compassion and foresight. The families who lost loved ones in Baltimore deserve to know that their heartache is not in vain – that we learned, acted, and are doing everything within our power to prevent another disaster.

We look forward to your leadership in prioritizing the safety of our nation's bridge infrastructure.

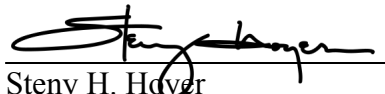
Sincerely,




Johnny Ciszewski, Jr.
Member of Congress




Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



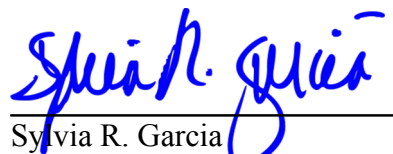
Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



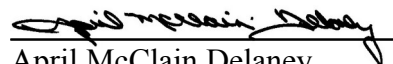
Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



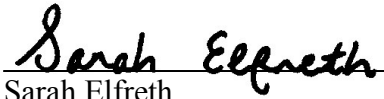
Eugene Simon Vindman
Member of Congress



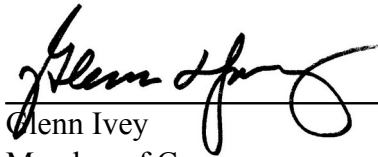
April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



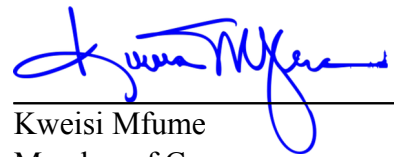
Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



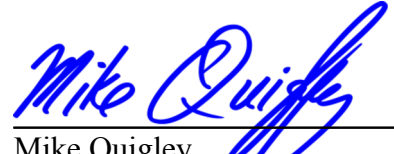
Glenn Ivey
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Andre Carson
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Angela Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

CC: Executive Director Shepherd, Admiral Lunday, Mr. Tymon, and Chairwoman Homendy