



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHAIN RESTAURANTS

March 16, 2018

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20015

Dear Representative Hunter:

On behalf of the National Council of Chain Restaurants, I write to express our support for legislation you have introduced to address the critical shortage of drivers in long haul trucking. The "Developing Responsible Individuals for a Vibrant Economy (DRIVE-Safe) Act," which will allow for the establishment of commercial driver apprenticeship programs, is a smart approach to addressing an important need in a key sector of our economy.

By way of background, the National Council of Chain Restaurants, a division of the National Retail Federation, is the leading organization exclusively representing chain restaurant companies. For more than 40 years, NCCR has worked to advance sound public policy that serves restaurant businesses and the millions of people they employ. NCCR members include the country's most respected quick-service and table-service chain restaurants. <http://www.nccr.net/>

As you know, the shortage of commercial truck drivers is a worsening problem. The American Trucking Associations estimates that 50,000 driving jobs went unfilled in 2017 and that gap is expected to grow to more than 174,000 by 2026. An existing federal regulation exacerbates the problem – the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) prohibits drivers under the age of 21 from driving a commercial motor vehicle in interstate commerce (across state lines). This creates a situation whereby recent high school graduates who may wish to pursue a career in long haul trucking are barred from doing so for three years, even if they reside in a state which allows individuals to obtain a commercial driver's license at age 18. Despite their interest in joining the trucking profession, which offers job security and robust pay, these youths are usually lost to other industries or, worse, fail to find employment at all.

Your legislation remedies the problem by removing this regulatory roadblock. The DRIVE-Safe Act allows employers to create two-stage apprenticeship programs with rigorous training and safety standards for individuals between the ages of 18 and 21. The programs consist of sequential probationary periods during which drivers must meet progressive competency requirements and demonstrate achievement of safety benchmarks. Additionally, the drivers must be accompanied by an experienced commercial driver's license holder during all hours of driving time in the program, and the trucks they operate during the program must have specified advanced safety features and technologies. Upon successful completion of the program, an individual may then drive a commercial truck in interstate commerce.

Chain restaurants and their thousands of small business franchisees rely on a stable system of distribution for their food supply chains. America's long-haul trucking industry provides the vital distribution networks that serve the chain restaurant industry and so many other sectors of our economy, but they need a steady stream of new talent to enter the profession in order to function. The DRIVE-Safe Act will go a long way toward addressing our nation's current truck driver shortage. Thank you for introducing this common-sense legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David French".

David French
Executive Director, NCCR