

The Committee will come to order.

First, I want to thank our witnesses for joining today's important discussion.

The fact that most Americans can safely assume the things they need will be in stock – from groceries to household goods and more – is a testament to the success of the freight industry.

This is especially important during the pandemic. Deliveries have increased exponentially so that American families can get what they need from the safety of their homes.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the workers who have made this possible by putting themselves in harm's way and by working around the clock.

The freight industry is also critical to our economy at large and American competitiveness.

Every day, the freight industry moves billions of dollars' worth of goods that power numerous industries and businesses. As a result, the freight industry has an outsized impact on the economy.

Unfortunately, this outsized impact means that problems in the freight industry have ripple effects throughout the economy.

This subcommittee held a hearing on April 27 where we learned that suppliers in the auto industry – many of which are small businesses – are struggling to keep up with the rapidly rising cost of freight and logistics.

The issues involved are complex, and they include problems within and beyond the freight industry's control – many of which also stem from the pandemic.

But the bottom line is that small businesses are experiencing higher prices and major delays.

These challenges highlight a major issue that I am committed to addressing: the resiliency of our supply chains.

Our supply chains are very efficient, but not resilient.

So when the unexpected happens, like a ship blocking the Suez Canal thousands of miles away, supply chain problems can compound dramatically.

Ultimately, the strength of our economy depends on the strength of the freight industry and our supply chains.

A key part of this economic engine is the flow of international freight through our country's ports of entry.

As Chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I am focused on the safe and secure facilitation of trade and travel at those entry points, which are staffed by the our U.S. Customs and Border Protection – also called CBP.

CBP Officers and Agriculture Specialists are critical to ensuring the cargo that enters the U.S. is secure and that pests that may inadvertently travel with cargo will not hurt our agricultural industry.

I have led bipartisan measures to address major staffing shortages for these integral positions, and I will continue to work to ensure that CBP has adequate resources to fulfill its mission to keep freight moving efficiently through ports of entry.

Our competitors, especially China, understand that infrastructure and supply chains are directly linked to economic competitiveness.

That's why China is making unprecedented investments in infrastructure and logistics – not only in China but around the globe as part of its Belt and Road Initiative.

Congress must ensure that the United States maintains its global leadership by investing in our infrastructure, our freight industry, and our workers.

The millions of workers employed in the freight industry are the backbone of the economy.



We must ensure they have the pay and protections they deserve, along with a safe working environment.

Safety is also essential to protect the public at large.

Whether we're addressing trucks that share the roads with millions of Americans every day, or railroads that move goods through and near our towns, Congress must make safety a top priority.

In conclusion, we have a chance to enter a new era of freight mobility that will support countless jobs and families – grow new industries – protect the environment – and improve safety.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on this subcommittee to make that vision a reality.

Now I invite Ranking Member Fischer to share her opening remarks.