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April 7, 2022

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker:

I urge you to ensure critical safety requirements for DUKW Amphibious Passenger Vessels, commonly known as “duck boats”, are included in the 2022 U.S. Coast Guard Reauthorization, which may soon be considered by the U.S. Senate.

Many in my home state of Missouri and across the country will remember July 19, 2018, as the tragic day that 17 people lost their lives and several more were injured in a boating accident on Table Rock Lake. During a severe thunderstorm, a duck boat called Stretch Duck 7 sank with 31 people on board, including children. Congress must honor the victims who have lost their lives in this accident and ensure it never happens again by passing comprehensive, common sense safety measures on every duck boat operation in America.

The tragedy in Missouri may have been the most recent loss of life involving a Duck Boat, but it was far from the first. In 1999, 13 people died when a duck boat sank in Lake Hamilton in Arkansas. In the years since, the death toll has climbed to over 40. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has issued numerous safety recommendations, some of them repeatedly.¹ The U.S. Coast Guard has concurred with some of those recommendations, and most recently the National Academies of Sciences has further emphasized the need for new Coast Guard rules, such as those in my legislation, S. 62, *Duck Boat Safety Enhancement Act of 2021*.²

Strong new safety recommendations for duck boats have bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress. In the 116th Congress, my bill codifying the NTSB’s recommendations passed your committee unanimously with your support and subsequently passed the Senate by unanimous consent on December 20, 2020.

¹ <https://www.ntsb.gov/news/press-releases/Pages/NR20191113.aspx>

² <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2021/12/u-s-coast-guard-should-issue-guidance-for-improving-safety-of-duck-boats-used-for-commercial-passenger-service-says-new-report>

Since that time, the findings and recommendations in my legislation have only been further confirmed and reinforced, such as through a study by the National Academies of Sciences. Most recently, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee advanced similar provisions in Title III, Section 305 of the *Don Young Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2022*. And last week, these provisions passed in the House of Representatives and were sent to the Senate for consideration.

As you consider the House-passed legislation and commence work on the reauthorization of the Coast Guard in your committee, I urge you to support and advance the provisions in my legislation codifying new safety requirements for duck boats. Congress must not delay any longer and must act to honor the lives lost by passing strong new safety and security measures for duck boats. This legislation must be enacted into law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley".

Josh Hawley
United States Senator