September 17, 2024

The Honorable Charles Schumer   The Honorable Mitch McConnell

Majority Leader   Minority Leader

U.S. Senate   U.S. Senate

Washington, D.C. 20515   Washington, D.C. 20515

Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

The below signed organizations – representing hundreds of thousands of mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and municipalities and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas. We are writing to you to express our opposition to S. 4989, the RECHARGE Act, which would allow electric vehicle (EV) charging on the Interstate right-of-way and at Interstate rest areas. Our groups have a long history of supporting EV charging and other alternative fuel incentive policies; we would welcome the opportunity to work with your offices to pursue those efforts in a way that does not unnecessarily undermine off-highway communities, blind entrepreneurs, and broader alternative fuel investment opportunities.

Our associations support investment in a full range of fueling options for consumers including electricity as well as other alternatives to petroleum based fuels. Many off-highway businesses have already invested in EV charging stations; indeed, many of our members are currently in the process of working with their state departments of transportation to install EV charging stations at locations along the Interstate. They are also considering investing in a variety of other clean fuel technologies. Businesses' desire to invest in these alternative fuels will be unmistakably diminished if EV chargers are permitted at Interstate rest areas.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congress and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services—such as fuel, food, and other convenience items. As a result, a robust off-highway business environment emerged at Interstate exchanges. Our groups support maintaining this ban, and oppose any exceptions that undermine it (whether it be EV charging stations, gas pumps, convenience stores, or restaurants).

gravitate toward these types of establishments and decimate the off-highway businesses, tax bases, and communities.

Congress prohibited states from offering commercial services at Interstate rest areas and on the right-of-way specifically so that private sector entities would grow and provide those services to travelers. This thinking has been validated over the last seven decades. There is no shortage of food service, refueling,