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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
 AND TRANSPORTATION

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May 9, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
 Secretary of Transportation
 U.S. Department of Transportation
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I write to commend your remarks last month at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (Academy) regarding the *Christ on the Water* painting. Your public acknowledgment of the painting's spiritual and historical significance was a powerful moment of moral clarity and leadership—one that resonated not only with the midshipmen in attendance, but with countless Americans who care deeply about preserving our nation's religious and military heritage.

As you know, this 1944 World War II-era memorial has been a fixture at the Academy since 1947, solemnly honoring the sacrifices of American mariners lost at sea. Its sudden concealment in 2023—done hastily in response to a single baseless complaint—did a great disservice to the Academy's heritage and to the memory of those the painting was meant to honor. To this day, no legal rationale has been provided, and the painting is reportedly out of public view in a flood-prone basement.

In two separate oversight letters to Academy Superintendent Joanna Nunan, I stated that the painting is fully consistent with the Supreme Court's Establishment Clause jurisprudence and longstanding historical practice. I also asked basic questions about the legal review, decision-making process, and plans for the Academy to avoid being hostile to religion. Regrettably, she failed to provide any substantive response to either letter.

Your statement—"Can we bring Jesus up from the basement?"—was more than rhetorical. I trust it will be seen as an imperative.

Thank you for your principled leadership, for defending our nation's religious heritage, and for working to ensure that this government-commissioned memorial is returned to its rightful place.

Sincerely,



Ted Cruz
 Chairman

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