**South Carolina General Assembly**

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**STATUS INFORMATION**

Joint Resolution

Sponsors: Reps. Gilliard and Williams

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Introduced in the House on March 28, 2024

Currently residing in the House Committee on **Education and Public Works**

Summary: Shipping Transportation and Port Bridge Safety Study Committee

**HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS**

Date Body Action Description with journal page number

3/28/2024 House Introduced and read first time ([House Journal‑page 11](h:\hj\20240328.docx))

3/28/2024 House Referred to Committee on **Education and Public Works** ([House Journal‑page 11](h:\hj\20240328.docx))

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**VERSIONS OF THIS BILL**

[03/28/2024](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess125_2023-2024/prever/5348_20240328.docx)

A joint Resolution

TO CREATE THE “SHIPPING TRANSPORTATION AND PORT BRIDGE SAFETY STUDY committee” TO EXAMINE CURRENT STATE AND FEDERAL SAFETY STANDARDS AND MEASURES CONCERNING THE NAVIGATION OF LARGE VESSELS UNDER MAJOR WATERWAY BRIDGES WHILE ENTERING OR LEAVING harbors, PORTS, AND CANALS IN THIS STATE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, TO REQUIRE THE STUDY COMMITTEE TO PREPARE A REPORT WITH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS for THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP AND DURATION OF THE STUDY COMMITTEE.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina General Assembly were saddened to hear of the tragic collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge near the Port of Baltimore after one of its pillars was struck by a cargo ship early March 26, 2024, creating a horrific mass casualty event and crippling transportation in the area; and

Whereas, according to news reports, the Baltimore crash was at least the second in just over a month in which a container ship hit a major road bridge, raising questions about the safety standards of increasingly large ships and the ability of bridges to withstand crashes; and

Whereas, according to news reports, a structural engineer and bridge designer opined the Baltimore bridge had a “lightweight” support structure and vessel protection devices in the water around the devices that were “not adequate”; and

Whereas, it is critical to the safety of South Carolinians that the integrity of its transportation system remains impeccable and that all reasonable efforts must be made to minimize any potential risks posed by container ships or other large vessels when traveling under bridges as they enter and leave harbors, ports, and canals in this State; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds it necessary and appropriate to appoint a study committee to review the adequacy of safety measures for ships traveling under bridges and through harbors, ports, and canals, as well as the adequacy of bridge support structures and vessel protection devices in this State. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. (A) There is created the “Shipping Transportation and Port Bridge Safety Study Committee” to:

(1) examine current state and federal safety standards and measures concerning the navigation of large vessels under major waterway bridges while entering or leaving harbors, ports, and canals in this State, including current pilotage training standards and how they compare to industry best practices;

(2) ascertain the extent to which bridge support piers or other bridge support structures are capable of withstanding impact from large vessels and the likelihood of bridge collapse or impassability from the loss or damage of such support structures; and

(3) ascertain the extent to which existing ship collision barriers and other vessel protection devices in the water around such support structures are capable of averting collisions between large vessels and bridge supports.

(B) The study committee shall provide a report that:

(1) addresses the areas of examination set forth in subsection (A); and

(2) makes recommendations for legislative, regulatory, or policy changes to address any identified risks posed by deficiencies or inadequacies identified in the areas of examination set forth in subsection (A), including enhanced pilotage training to ensure standards meet or exceed industry best practices.

(C)(1) The study committee is composed of nine members, consisting of:

(a) two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, one of whom must represent a district in which a major port is located;

(b) two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House, one of whom must represent a district in which a major port is located;

(c) two civil engineers with extensive experience with bridge design and construction over bodies of water;

(d) the President and Chief Executive Officer of the South Carolina Ports Authority, or her designee;

(e) the South Carolina Secretary of Transportation, or his designee; and

(f) the Director of the South Carolina Department of Public Safety, or his designee.

(2) A vacancy in the membership of the study committee must be filled in the manner of original appointment.

(3) Members of the study committee shall serve without compensation, but are allowed the mileage, subsistence, and per diem allowed by law for members of state boards, committees, and commissions, to be paid equally from approved accounts of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

(4) The study committee shall choose its officers and must be provided with meeting space and clerical, administrative, and research services by the Senate Transportation Committee and the House Education and Public Works Committee.

(5) The study committee may obtain data or other information from state agencies that is relevant to the purposes of this study committee; provided, however, only no personally identifiable data may be obtained by the study. Any state agency that receives a request pursuant to this joint resolution shall respond promptly and provide the requested data or other information.

(6) The study committee shall make a report of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly before January 1, 2026, at which time the study committee shall terminate.

SECTION 2. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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