

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

**WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND  
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,  
Complainant,**

**v.**

**PUGET SOUND PILOTS,  
Respondent.**

**Docket TP-**

**TESTIMONY OF  
CHIEF MATE ALYSIA JOHNSON  
ON BEHALF OF PUGET SOUND PILOTS**

**JUNE 29, 2022**

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**I. IDENTIFICATION OF WITNESS**

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**Q: Please state your name, business and business address.**

A: Alysia Johnson, Chief Mate, SubCom, LLC, Fleet Operations Center, 1001 East McComas Street, Baltimore, MD 21230.

**Q: Please describe your maritime education and your current work position.**

A: I am a 2015 graduate of the US Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York. I am currently employed by SubCom, LLC, a US company headquartered in Eatontown, New Jersey. SubCom designs, manufactures, deploys, maintains and operates fiber optic cable networks throughout the world. Since December 2020, I have been employed by SubCom as Chief Mate aboard M/V Endeavour, a recently re-flagged and re-classed multi-purpose vessel that has just completed a major conversion to cable layer. The Chief Mate is second in command of the vessel and is the safety officer, in addition to serving as head of the Deck Department. A copy of my CV is Exh. AJ-02.

**II. PURPOSE OF TESTIMONY**

**Q: What is the purpose of your testimony?**

A: The purpose of my testimony is to describe the education and training necessary to pursue a career as an officer aboard seagoing vessels, the skillset acquired in that type of maritime work, the compensation and benefits available today to officers in the US merchant marine, my observations regarding the levels of attrition among female officers pursuing seagoing careers and my opinion regarding the importance of more progressive policies by US pilot groups if the root causes of female attrition in seagoing careers are to be reversed.

1 **Q: Please describe the nature of the curriculum that you pursued at the U.S.**  
2 **Merchant Marine Academy.**

3  
4 A: The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York, which is often  
5 referred to as Kings Point, is one of seven maritime academies in the United States and the  
6 only one that is federally funded. Cadets entering the freshman class are selected from  
7 applicants who must be nominated by a U.S. senator or congressperson, similar to the  
8 admissions requirement that exists at the four military academies for the U.S. Army, U.S.  
9 Navy & Marines, U.S. Air Force and U.S. Coast Guard. The four-year program at Kings  
10 Point is very intensive because it combines the requirements of a full degree-granting  
11 Bachelor of Science curriculum with both an ROTC-style military regiment and an entire  
12 calendar year at sea. As a Maritime Transportation major, my curriculum requirements  
13 included courses in navigation, rules of the road, ship handling, cargo and logistics, ship  
14 stability and naval architecture, maritime electronics, marine insurance, admiralty law and  
15 professional license preparation. In order to graduate, every cadet must earn an entry level  
16 officer's license—either the Third Mate of Unlimited Tonnage license for deck officers or the  
17 Third Assistant Engineer of Unlimited Horsepower license for engineering officers.  
18 Obtaining either of these licenses at Kings Point requires both a minimum of 360 days  
19 aboard a commercial vessel at sea and passing a multi-part Coast Guard exam. To fulfill the  
20 seagoing requirement, cadets spend three trimesters at sea.  
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1 **Q: Did you receive any awards while you were at the U.S. Merchant Marine**  
2 **Academy?**

3 A: Yes, I received a number of awards during my time at Kings Point. The awards that I  
4 consider most relevant to my seagoing career include the following:

- 5 • The American Bureau of Shipping Award, given to the marine transportation major  
6 who has consistently manifested the qualities characteristic of an exemplary deck  
7 officer such as loyalty, integrity, leadership, bearing and aptitude for service based on  
8 grades, regiment and sea year evaluations.
- 9 • The Astronaut Elliott M. See, Jr. Memorial Award, awarded to a marine  
10 transportation midshipman based on outstanding achievement and academic excellence  
11 in marine electronics courses.
- 12 • The National Society Daughters of the American Colonists Award, granted to a  
13 female midshipman with a Deck License curriculum who has the highest cumulative  
14 grade point average.
- 15 • The Betty H. Olchin/Capt. Samuel Londynsky Award, issued to a midshipman who  
16 has shown outstanding achievement and aptitude in the admiralty law and marine  
17 insurance courses at the Academy.
- 18 • The Transas USA Award, made to a marine transportation major who is the top deck  
19 midshipman based upon grades in the Radar/ARPA class and who has demonstrated  
20 exceptional skills and interest in not only the art, but the modern science of electronic  
21 navigation.

18 **Q: Please describe the progression of your work experience with SubCom.**

19 A: I started in July 2015 as a third mate aboard the C/S Resolute. As Third Mate, my 12  
20 hours of work per day included eight hours of watchstanding on the bridge and four hours  
21 devoted to work as the assistant ship safety officer, which included regular inspections and  
22 maintenance of all lifesaving and firefighting equipment. After one year in that position, I  
23 was promoted to Second Mate, a position I held for 16 months. As Second Mate, my 12-hour  
24 days continued to include watchstanding (seagoing navigation and anti-collision watch) on  
25 the bridge for eight hours and another four hours devoted to serving as the primary navigator  
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1 and radio officer. This included maintaining the ship's portfolio of charts, writing voyage  
2 plans and maintaining regulatory compliance for and performing preventive maintenance of  
3 radio equipment. I was then promoted to First Officer, a cable ship position I held for about  
4 2.5 years. The First Officer serves as the nighttime counterpart to the Chief Mate in a  
5 watchstanding capacity. In addition, as First Officer, I was responsible for working with the  
6 Captain to coordinate crew payroll, preparing port formalities paperwork and all sign on/sign  
7 off paperwork for the crew and maintaining rope records and cable operations planning. In  
8 2018, during my tenure as First Officer, I was selected for a 75-day rotation as Fleet  
9 Operations Officer for SubCom. In this position, I rotated through the company office,  
10 serving as subject matter expert for cable operations and shipboard matters while writing  
11 manuals and policy for the fleet. I was the final editor for the first revision of the company's  
12 Cable Operations Manual in 20 years, which now serves as a fleet standard document.  
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15 **Q: Earlier, you stated that you were promoted to the position of Chief Mate in**  
16 **December, 2020. How long do you expect to serve in that position?**

17 A: I earned my Master Unlimited Tonnage on Oceans License in December 2020. I  
18 would expect to serve another one to two years in the position of Chief Mate and then,  
19 hopefully, be promoted to Captain.  
20  
21

22 **Q: Please describe the duties of a Master aboard a cable laying ship like M/V**  
23 **Endeavour.**

24 A: Endeavor has a crew of 65, which includes deck and engine crew, a steward's  
25 department, and specialists in the cable and submersibles departments. The ship is designed  
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1 to lay fiber-optic cable along a precisely defined route utilizing dynamic positioning  
2 navigation capability. The Captain is responsible for everything and everyone on board the  
3 ship. At our company, the Captain stands one dynamic positioning watch every day and must  
4 be present on the bridge for certain critical evolutions involving cable work, such as  
5 launching or recovering the sea plow used to bury cable, and ship work, such as all dockings  
6 or undockings and all maneuvers in pilotage waters. He or she manages everything from the  
7 food supplies to the ship's schedule, oversees the navigation and coordinates with the office  
8 on maintenance and regulatory compliance.  
9

10  
11 **Q: During your nearly seven years of service with SubCom, what sort of work**  
12 **schedule do you have?**

13 A: We work a typical maritime industry schedule with equal amounts of time on and off.  
14 My standard schedule is 75 days on, followed by 75 days off. The schedule is designed to  
15 provide the ship's officers with an average of 182 1/2 days on and the same amount of time  
16 off.  
17

18  
19 **Q: Based upon your experience to date, are you working equal amounts of time on**  
20 **and time off?**

21 A: Close, but not exactly. Serving on a cable layer often results in some modest  
22 extensions of the 75-day on-duty period due to delays or complications in the cable laying  
23 process at sea. So far, I've been working closer to 200 days per year rather than 182.  
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1 **Q: Earlier in your testimony, you mentioned that your curriculum at the U.S.**  
2 **Merchant Marine Academy required participation in an ROTC-type program. When**  
3 **you graduated from Kings Point, did you receive a commission in a branch of the US**  
4 **military?**

5 A: Yes. At graduation, I was commissioned as an Ensign in the US Navy. Kings Point is  
6 one of the federal service academies, and the nature of that service is to one of the uniformed  
7 branches of the military. We incur an eight-year commitment, which is how graduates of  
8 Kings Point pay back the country for our maritime academy education that was financed by  
9 US taxpayers. I have been promoted twice and am now a Lieutenant.  
10

11  
12 **Q: Please describe the nature of your work in the US Navy Reserve.**

13 A: I spend two weeks per year fulfilling my Naval Reserve obligation. I earned my  
14 Strategic Sealift Officer Warfare Insignia in 2017, and have done several short periods of  
15 active duty, including six weeks as a watchstander in Bahrain. In 2019, I was selected to be  
16 an instructor for Afloat Bridge Resource Management Workshops for Commander, Naval  
17 Surface Force, US Pacific Fleet. The impetus for this Navy program came from the tragic  
18 accidents involving the USS McCain and USS Fitzgerald in 2017, both of which collided  
19 with large foreign cargo ships. These workshops provide Navy Surface Warfare Officers, the  
20 Navy's ship drivers, with more information about merchant vessel maneuvering  
21 characteristics and watchstanding routines, tips and practical training on bridge electronics  
22 like RADAR and AIS to increase situational awareness, and training on industry best  
23 practices for bridge resource management.  
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1 **Q: How are you compensated at SubCom and what types of benefits do you receive?**

2 A: All of our company's officers are members of the American Maritime Officers Union.  
3 Under the union contract, I will earn somewhere between \$145,000 and \$175,000 per year as  
4 Chief Mate. If I am ultimately promoted to Master, I will earn somewhere between \$180,000  
5 and \$225,000 annually based on the current contract. In terms of benefits, we have a  
6 generous health insurance program through the union that is entirely funded by the company  
7 except for nominal co-pays. In addition, we have a 401(k) pension program where the  
8 company matches up to 4% of employee contributions subject to a cap of 10% of the  
9 employee's compensation.  
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11  
12 **Q: Why do you believe there is a higher rate of attrition among females in the**  
13 **maritime industry compared to men?**

14 A: I believe there are multiple factors, but the single biggest cause, in my opinion, is that  
15 the standard work cycle in maritime positions aboard vessels, whether at sea or in the  
16 domestic towboat industry, is not family friendly. By that, I mean that it is not feasible to  
17 integrate having a family with either a seagoing career where you are working 75 days on  
18 and then have 75 days off or an inland transportation towboat industry career where the  
19 typical work cycle is two weeks on and then two weeks off.  
20

21  
22 **Q: Since you have been in your seagoing career over the last seven years, have you**  
23 **observed attrition within the ranks of your female colleagues that is a direct result of**  
24 **what you characterize as a work schedule that is not family-friendly?**  
25  
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1 A: Yes, definitely. I have seen multiple women who are pursuing either a career as a  
2 deck officer or in the engine department who ultimately make the decision to terminate their  
3 careers at sea in order to have a family. I have also observed that this work cycle barrier to  
4 having a family causes some women not to pursue promotions beyond second mate because  
5 these women know that they will eventually be quitting their seagoing positions to go ashore  
6 and start a family.

7  
8 **Q: In preparing this testimony, have you become aware of the progressive**  
9 **maternity leave policy that the Puget Sound Pilots have adopted which extends up to six**  
10 **months of time off at full pay to a female pilot?**

11  
12 A: Yes.

13  
14 **Q: What is your opinion regarding the significance of this policy for a U.S. pilot**  
15 **group?**

16 A: I would like to make several points. First, the adoption of this type of progressive  
17 family-friendly policy will become known throughout the industry fairly quickly. This is  
18 because, in my experience, mariners commonly share information back and forth about the  
19 details of their compensation and benefits packages and compare those to what is available  
20 through other companies or union contracts. Second, if it became widely known that there  
21 were several pilot groups in the United States that offered a similar maternity leave benefit, I  
22 believe it would cause a significant number of the women who are currently dropping out of  
23 their deck department careers to pursue them for the 10 to 15 years necessary to be qualified  
24 to apply for a maritime pilot position. This is because, compared to the extended work-cycle  
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1 time served on the vessel for seagoing deck careers, a maritime pilot is living at home and  
2 traveling during their on-duty work cycle to and from the pilotage assignments within their  
3 pilotage district. Although the particular assignments are unpredictable and often occur at  
4 night, I know, as the daughter of a now-retired Columbia River Bar Pilot, that a maritime  
5 pilot can maintain a healthy family life with children because he or she is traveling to  
6 pilotage assignments from their home instead of spending extended periods of time aboard a  
7 ship away from home.

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10 **Q: In considering a potential career as a maritime pilot, what other factors would**  
11 **be important to qualified female or minority candidates?**

12 A: I believe there are two important criteria that any qualified woman or candidate of  
13 color would view as highly important. First, the pilot group must have a reputation as an  
14 organization and a group culture that is supportive of its pilot members generally, and a  
15 diverse pilot corps in particular. Second, because highly qualified women and minority  
16 candidates are part of the national pool with multiple pilot group options, the pilot group  
17 would need to have a competitive package of compensation and benefits including medical  
18 insurance and a good pension plan.  
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21 **III. CONCLUSION**

22 **Q: Does this conclude your testimony?**

23 A: Yes.  
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