

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

May 5, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

As you consider the many industries that have been affected by the outbreak of COVID-19 in forthcoming stimulus legislation, we would like to single out America's domestic commercial fisheries and seafood industry for special consideration. While we were pleased to see that you were able to work with our Senate colleagues to include \$300 million dollars to support our domestic fisheries in the CARES Act, this number is insufficient to the task of supporting this essential, iconic and sustainable industry as the crisis continues.

The COVID-19 virus has resulted in the near total closure of the hospitality and tourism industry both domestically and overseas. With nearly 70% of seafood produced in the United States being consumed in restaurants, coupled with traditional export markets being eliminated by travel and trade restrictions, America's domestic fisheries face a time of unparalleled uncertainty.

Domestic fisheries support more than 1.7 million jobs in the United States and create more than \$64 billion dollars in economic activity annually. America's fisheries are amongst the most sustainable in the world and are the way of life for countless families from Dutch Harbor to New Bedford, Morro Bay to Chatham, Honolulu to the Florida Panhandle.

To meet the unprecedented challenges facing America's domestic fisheries after the near total collapse of traditional markets, we are asking you to provide \$20 billion dollars in support for America's domestic fisheries in any forthcoming stimulus legislation.

A significant part of this funding should be immediately prioritized to augment the initial \$300 million in direct fishery disaster assistance to fishing families and their communities as they attempt to recover from the COVID pandemic. We must also utilize

this funding to direct the Department of Commerce to coordinate with individual States to identify and purchase surplus seafood products for donation purposes to provide a safe protein source for our citizens in need; and fund the development of markets and advertising campaigns to increase seafood consumption in the near-term.

In addition, we are also presented with a unique opportunity to make a down payment on the future stability and development of the American fisheries industry. The COVID pandemic has provided clear evidence that the United States needs to start building the resilient infrastructure that will prepare America's fishermen for the future.

To meet these needs, we believe funding from a future stimulus should be used to help our domestic commercial fishing and seafood industry in the following prioritized areas:

- Substantially increasing the monies available for fishery disaster assistance with an emphasis on timeliness and fairness across all regions and States.
- Working with States and fisheries stakeholder groups to identify products currently available for purchase/donation and develop seafood marketing opportunities for domestically produced fisheries commodities in the US.
- Creating regional advertising campaigns to educate consumers on how to cook more seafood at home.
- Expanding the Fisheries Finance Program (FFP) to create more opportunity to finance and refinance existing businesses while protecting the Traditional program uses.
- Modernizing NOAA Fisheries data collection and publication system.
- Where appropriate, increasing funding for electronic monitoring to reduce reliance upon on-board, at-sea observers, to protect human health while still adequately monitoring fisheries. As well as funding or subsidizing human observer programs in fisheries which would be otherwise unviable.
- Reinvigorating NOAA fisheries stock assessment systems, particularly in areas where traditional surveys will be disrupted by the development of offshore wind.
- Updating the physical infrastructure of the NOAA Fisheries Service, by rebuilding NOAA's Science Centers and Regional Fisheries offices.
- Ensuring tribal and subsistence fisheries are fully supported.
- Expanding the Sea Grant College Program.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many underlying weaknesses in the global economy, which has highlighted the importance of taking steps now to not only shore up the economic health of fishing families and their communities, but also to put the infrastructure in place to ensure long-term success and sustainability of America's fisheries.

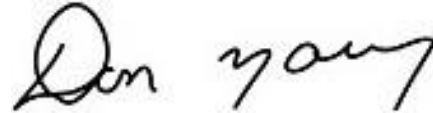
We again respectfully request that any additional stimulus or infrastructure package continue to support America's fishermen in the amount of \$20 billion dollars. Thank you

for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions about this matter please contact Andrew Nelson in Congressman Keating's office at [Andrew.Nelson@mail.house.gov](mailto:Andrew.Nelson@mail.house.gov) or Kayla Rillo in Congressman Young's office at [Kayla.Rillo@mail.house.gov](mailto:Kayla.Rillo@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



Don Young  
Member of Congress

**Signatories:**

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