



June 24, 2020

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy,

On behalf of our diverse network of members, I want to thank you for your leadership and cooperation in providing much-needed flexibility to the Payroll Protection Program with the recent passage of H.R. 7010, the *Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act of 2020*. As you know, many of the small businesses around the country have suffered catastrophic consequences from the effects of the pandemic. These recent changes provide them an opportunity to rebuild their businesses during these extremely challenging economic times.

The fixes within H.R. 7010 are an important step forward, but many challenges to rebuilding the economy lie ahead. As executive director of the Marine Fish Conservation Network (Network), a coalition of commercial and recreational fishing associations, regional and national conservation groups, aquaria, chefs, sustainable seafood suppliers, and marine science organizations, I am writing to share our recommendations for addressing those challenges facing the many small businesses we work with, such as commercial fishing operators, guides, outfitters, processors, restaurants, and chefs.

These businesses provide sustainable, high-quality food for a hungry nation and gainful employment for workers in Main Street businesses. These and other small businesses will be instrumental in rebuilding our nation's economy. Financial support from the federal government will help them regain their footing and remain long-term contributors to the economy.

Rebuilding the economy

Congress and the Administration will need to create additional, long-term policy initiatives for rebuilding the nation's economy. As Congress develops these proposals, we recommend addressing the following areas.

Support for direct-to-consumer and working waterfronts infrastructure

Fishermen and processors have seen drastic reductions in sales because of the pandemic. The seafood industry is pivoting to direct-to-consumer models in order to meet the demand for locally sourced, high-quality, domestic seafood. Federal investments in modernizing working waterfronts and increasing seafood supply infrastructure to bring quality seafood to consumers will directly benefit local fishing communities by creating jobs and retail channels. Congress should ensure that the economic gains made in the direct-to-consumer sector are preserved and strengthened as the nation recovers. We support the inclusion of a Working Waterfronts Grant Program as well as other legislative approaches to supporting working waterfront infrastructure.

Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP)

We recommend including fishermen in the USDA's CFAP, which received \$19 billion in funding in the CARES Act (P.L. 116-136). Our country's fishermen play an equally significant role in harvesting and producing our nation's food. As new rebuilding funding is appropriated for CFAP, we agree with the calls to include at least \$2.78 billion to purchase domestically harvested and processed seafood products and distribute them to local, state, and national non-profits providing food to those Americans in need.

Section 12005 Funds

We support an additional \$2.7 billion for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) under the terms of section 12005 of the CARES Act in order to provide direct relief to tribal, subsistence, commercial, and charter fishery participants impacted by coronavirus.

We encourage Congress to direct NOAA to establish clear and transparently derived allocation formulas, set clear guidelines for use of the funds, and distribute the funds within 30 days of the appropriation on such funds.

Support national seafood marketing initiatives

The U.S. has not convened or supported a national seafood promotion and marketing program since 1990. The revival of the National Fish and Seafood Promotional Council would support the fishing industry, restaurants, and consumers at this critical time and beyond as we recover. Congressionally authorized programs, including USDA's Research and Promotion Programs, and the Value-Added Producers Program and Agriculture Marketing Initiative should be

expanded to include and support our fisheries through legislative mandate. We recommend that Congress work with members of the commercial fishing industry, culinary community, and the Marine Fisheries Advisory Council to expeditiously design and implement a robust, fiscally solvent and supported seafood promotion and marketing program.

These issues are critically important to our nation's fishermen, culinary industry, and seafood supply chains. The Network and its diverse membership welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to take these and other supportive actions to ensure that the small businesses that make up our working waterfronts and coastal communities continue to survive now and into the future.

Young Fishermen's Development Act

Finally, we urge Congress to pass and fund the *Young Fishermen's Development Act* (H.R. 1240, S. 496). This Act provides essential support for young fishermen who are facing a new marketing landscape and a host of economic challenges. Now more than ever America's young fishermen need training and education that helps them meet challenges and take advantage of new opportunities.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance or provide additional information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert C. Vandermark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Robert C. Vandermark
Executive Director