

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

April 4, 2019

Acting Secretary David Bernhardt
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Acting Secretary Bernhardt:

I am writing to follow up on our prior discussion following your nomination to be Secretary of the Interior.

To begin, I strongly oppose opening up waters off the coast of Maine or in any proximate area to offshore drilling, which could negatively affect the health of Maine's fisheries and coastal resources. Much of Maine's economy depends on the health of the ocean. Even a minor spill could irreparably damage the ecosystem in the Gulf of Maine, causing harm not only to the environment but the state's fisheries and tourism as well. The lobster industry has an estimated \$1.5 billion impact on the state's economy annually, not to mention the other industries that rely on our pristine waters. I have supported legislation with every other senator from New England to prohibit oil and gas leasing off the coast of New England. Will the position of a state's elected leadership be a determining factor during any review of any potential areas for offshore drilling?

Additionally, I believe maintaining the public's trust is critical for government employees, and is especially true for someone nominated to lead a Department that employs approximately 70,000 people. While I understand you have spent 15 years of your 25-year career in public service, you have also served as a lawyer representing clients on a broad array of issues. At your confirmation hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, you testified that "maintaining an ethical culture is critical." Can you expand on how you plan to handle potential ethics conflicts, if you are confirmed?

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator