

SUSAN M. COLLINS
MAINE

413 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904
(202) 224-2523
(202) 224-2693 (FAX)

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

COMMITTEES:
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April 29, 2020

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing on behalf of the Maine seafood industry, which is in dire need of assistance due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When you signed the CARES Act (PL 16-136) into law on March 27, Maine fishermen and the diverse supply chain businesses with which they work were encouraged by the inclusion of \$300 million in assistance specifically for their sector. I worked with a bipartisan group of Senate colleagues to secure this crucial funding. It has been more than a month since you signed the bill into law, and to date none of these funds have been disbursed to those who desperately need this support. With each day that passes absent this assistance, the frustration and economic damage mount.

The unanticipated, government-mandated closure of nearly all food service establishments is hitting the seafood sector especially hard, as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) has previously estimated that nearly 70 percent of all seafood eaten in the U.S. is consumed through these channels. In addition to the domestic food service deadlock, international sales of U.S seafood have virtually disappeared with trade and transportation options becoming increasingly scarce or unavailable entirely.

The ripple effects of these disruptions have harmed the entire seafood supply chain – including fishermen, processors, dealers, and the countless Maine communities whose cultures and economies are anchored by fisheries. The seafood sector has been a stalwart economic driver throughout American history. We must ensure that this vital industry receives the stabilizing support it requires to endure these unprecedented times.

The Maine seafood industry and those who work within it are defined by resilience. I am confident that this sector will demonstrate its resilience once again and emerge strong from this crisis – but these fishermen and businesses need immediate access to the help that Congress rightfully provided them in the CARES Act. I urge you to direct the Department of Commerce to release this much-needed assistance as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator