

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

February 7, 2022

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

As you continue to negotiate the final fiscal year 2022 (FY22) Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) Appropriations bill, I am writing to reiterate my request for additional funding to help lobstermen and women burdened by new right whale regulations acquire and deploy compliant gear. Flawed and incomplete data are being used to inform the rule, and NOAA's own data show that the Maine fishery has never been linked to a right whale death. Nevertheless, NOAA is imposing expensive new gear requirements, and I want to help ensure that our lobstermen and women receive financial assistance to adapt to these onerous changes.

I very much appreciate the \$10 million that was included in the Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee's FY22 bill "to cover costs paid for by the fishing industry to comply with the 2021 rule to modify the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan." While this support is encouraging, it falls far short of the amount needed to cover the projected costs to lobstermen. According to calculations by the Maine Lobstermen's Association, the low-end estimate of the cumulative state industry costs of trawling up, acquiring and adding weak points, purchasing specialized rope, lengthening groundlines, marking gear, and hiring additional crew to complete this work is approximately \$45 million. In addition to the costs associated with gear conversion, the industry is projected to incur \$7.3 million in lost revenue (due to lost fishing time) should the requirements be implemented on May 1, as opposed to July 1.

Without adequate assistance from the federal government, which is responsible for imposing these burdensome and misguided requirements on the fishery, many lobstermen and women will simply not be able to afford to make these changes and could subsequently be compelled to abandon not just their livelihoods, but their very way of life. It would be unconscionable for the federal government to regulate these hardworking individuals out of business, especially when the record clearly demonstrates that they are not the source of the problem.

Our lobstermen and women have always been extremely sensitive to the environment and good stewards of the resource. They should receive the federal assistance necessary to allow them to continue to fish and support their families, their communities, and the state economy.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator