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December 18, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to strongly urge you to include long-needed funding for the Fishing Safety Training Grants Program and Fishing Safety Research Grant Program in your Fiscal Year 2017 budget.

Using data released in April 2015 from the U.S. Department of Labor, *Bloomberg Business* analyzed U.S. occupations based on the rate of on-the-job fatalities and found that fishing is the deadliest job in the country. Northeast ground fishermen are 37 times more likely to die on the job than police officers, and 171 times more likely to die on the job than the average U.S. worker. The North Atlantic waters fished by Massachusetts [New England] fishermen are the deadliest in the country. The rate of loss is staggering. If our school teachers died on the job at the same rate as our fishermen in Massachusetts, we would lose 400 public school teachers each year.

The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 (CGGA) requires a new safety and survival training program for individuals in charge of a commercial fishing vessel that operates beyond three nautical miles 46 U.S.C. §4502(g). While Congress stipulated new safety training, it failed to fund the grant programs that were specifically created to provide assistance to the fishing

community. These new rules took effect in 2015 and prior to this change, the rule only applied to vessels operating outside of 13 nautical miles. This expansion of the applicable nautical area has dramatically increased the number of affected vessels in Massachusetts.

In addition, the CGGA and the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2012 include new requirements for Mandatory Dockside Safety Examinations and Survival Craft. These new mandates take effect this year and require the fishing families of Massachusetts to make large investments in their fleet.

The safety and survival of our commercial fishermen is of the utmost importance, and we fully support the expansion of safety requirements. However, the financial costs are significant and falling entirely on our fishing families.

In light of these new training mandates, the CGGA created two new competitive grant programs to provide this training and assist commercial fishing vessel operators with compliance.

- ***$3 million for Fishing Safety Training Grants Program***
- ***$3 million for Fishing Safety Research Grant Program (Includes funding for safety equipment)***

While this authorization was extended through Fiscal Year 2017, funds have yet to be appropriated for these programs.

Organizations including the Fishing Partnership Support Services (FPSS) have been able to provide a limited amount of safety and survival trainings through non-federal grant funding, and there is conclusive evidence that these trainings save lives. In Alaska, training offered by the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA) played a critical role in the reduction of fatalities from 37 per year between 1986-1990, to fewer than 10 per year between 2008-2012: the biggest drop ever in the United States. Last year, not one Alaskan fisherman died at sea. Furthermore, the National Institute for Occupational Health & Safety (NIOSH) research demonstrates that AMSEA-trained fishermen are almost twice as likely to survive an incident over those who had not been trained.

Additionally, the cost savings associated with preventing just one search and rescue is more than the cost of running the program in New England for an entire year. A U.S. Coast Guard search and rescue often costs $200,000 per day, and multiday searches can cost more than $1.5 million.

Only ten percent of New England fishermen have been through safety training. Should the Fishing Safety Training Grants Program and Fishing Safety Research Grant Program receive an appropriation, organizations such as FPSS could compete for funding to provide the AMSEA safety training necessary to save lives. Non-federal applicants are required to provide matching funds and FPSS is prepared to offer matching funds for New England using the grant to train one hundred percent of Massachusetts fishermen within 10 years.

The heritage and economy of Massachusetts is closely linked to our fishing industry. Efforts by the Administration to make relatively modest annual expenditures to help train our fishermen can save lives and avert serious injuries. We urge your strongest consideration for providing this essential and long overdue funding to help ensure the safety of the hardworking fishermen at sea.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to continuing our work together in protecting the lives and health of the fishermen in our coastal communities.

Sincerely,

Charles D. Baker

Elizabeth Warren
US Senator

Edward Markey
US Senator

Richard Neal
US Representative

James P. McGovern
US Representative

Michael E. Capuano
US Representative

Stephen Lynch
US Representative

Niki Tsongas
US Representative

William Keating
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Joseph Kennedy III
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Katherine Clark
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