

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 28th, 2021

The Honorable Kevin Shea
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington DC 20250

Dear Acting Secretary Shea,

Since the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, food processors have had to invest significant time, resources, and attention to protect their workers and safeguard their ability to provide food to our nation in a time of unprecedented crisis. Recognizing the challenges facing seafood processing facilities and processing vessels, as well as the challenges facing American agricultural producers generally, we included specific language in Division N of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021* authorizing the Department of Agriculture to provide grants and loans to seafood processing facilities and processing vessels to help them respond to coronavirus and protect their workers against COVID-19.

Seafood processors around the nation are conducting regular testing to ensure their workforce in coastal communities remains COVID-free, providing quarantine housing for employees to complete the recommended 14-day isolation period, chartering secure transportation for employees traveling to remote processing facilities, and marshalling a range of other resources to ensure and enforce safe working conditions. These protocols are expected to cost hundreds of millions of dollars through next year, much of which cannot be covered by other Federal assistance programs.

Given the complexity of U.S. seafood supply chains, the success of seafood processors to meet and overcome the challenges created by COVID is directly linked to the success of fishermen who risk their safety to harvest the seafood that Americans enjoy. If processors cannot operate due to COVID shutdowns, independent fishermen have no market for their product and no revenue to support their small businesses. Federal support to help seafood processors weather the pandemic is urgently needed—without it, our nation's entire seafood industry may falter.

We urge you to expeditiously develop and robustly fund a program to provide grants and forgivable loan support to seafood processing facilities and processing vessels for COVID response measures, as required by Section 751 of Subtitle B, Title VII, Division N of P.L. 116-260. Please work with us and the seafood industry to effectively design and streamline delivery of assistance.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



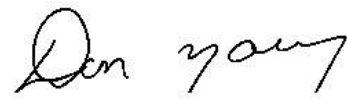
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United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, MD
United States Senator



Don Young
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Jared Golden
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Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland
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