

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 22, 2014

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker,

We are writing to express our strong support for the request from Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick to immediately begin the process of allocating funds from the federal disaster assistance provision included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76) on a state by state basis for the Northeast Multispecies Groundfish fishery failure.

In September 2012, the Department of Commerce declared a commercial fishery failure under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and Section 308(b) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act for the 2013 season. In January 2014, the Consolidated Appropriations Act provided \$75 million in disaster assistance to struggling fishermen and fishing-related businesses in areas which had received a disaster declaration in either 2012 or 2013.

The fishermen and fishing communities in Massachusetts are in desperate need of economic relief as they struggle to make ends meet following extreme reductions in the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) for Gulf of Maine cod, an important stock for the Northeast industry. Other critical stocks of cod, yellowtail, haddock, and plaice have seen similar reductions.

Fish stocks have not rebounded despite strict adherence to new and rigorous management practices by fishermen. It is likely that these reduced catch limits could be in place for several years, further compounding the impact of these cuts to the industry. As a result, many Massachusetts fishermen and fishing-related businesses have entered into bankruptcy or are surviving serious declines in income due to the fishery failure.

While we understand and appreciate the efforts made by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) since January to find a compromise proposal to disperse the disaster funding to the Northeast states, there appear to be fundamental differences that will be difficult to reconcile in a regional solution. Further delay in disbursing federal disaster assistance would impose an unacceptable burden on Massachusetts fishermen and fishing-related businesses that have already been waiting years for help in dealing with the commercial fishery failure.

Accordingly, we request that the Department of Commerce immediately work with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to determine an appropriate process for distributing the Massachusetts portion of the Northeast fisheries disaster assistance.

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We agree with the conclusion reached by Governor Patrick that the direct impact to Massachusetts commercial groundfishermen of the fishery failure amounts to 90 percent of the estimated economic impact for the Northeast region. We believe that it is important to reiterate that this is a groundfish fishery disaster and, as you know, the vast majority of the industry is located in Massachusetts.

Additionally, we believe that the metrics used to determine the distribution of funds to each of the Northeast states should be consistent with the metrics used by the Department of Commerce and NOAA to determine the regional distribution of the original \$75 million in disaster assistance.

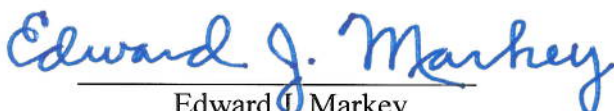
The groundfish fishery disaster has had a devastating economic impact on businesses that depend on the fishing industry – causing economic harm to shore-side businesses such as seafood auctions, gear suppliers, and seafood processors, among others.

We believe that the most equitable manner by which to distribute this much-needed disaster assistance will be primarily based on where the fish is landed, processed, and shipped to end users.

This vital assistance would be used to help ease the devastating economic effect of federal regulations imposed to improve recovery of groundfish stocks. It will also help Massachusetts fishermen and fishing communities – who make up the vast majority of New England’s commercial fishing industry – endure this incredibly challenging situation.

We remain committed to preserving and promoting our fishing industry. We look forward to continuing to work with you to effectively address the challenges facing this critical industry.

Sincerely,



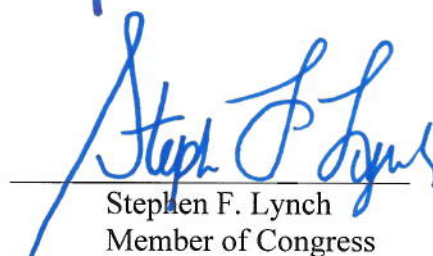
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United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



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Member of Congress




Stephen F. Lynch
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