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Congress of the United States
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July 28, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Thank you for your efforts to support American producers during this unprecedented pandemic. Aquaculture producers across New Hampshire are experiencing severe hardships due to decreased demands for their products, and I write to urge you to reconsider your decision not to provide eligibility to molluscan shellfish and marine algae aquaculture producers under the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP).

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, New Hampshire's aquaculture industry was experiencing significant growth and provided many benefits to our region's hospitality and tourism sectors. Additionally, molluscan shellfish production provides significant ecological services to our waterways, such as water filtration and nutrient extraction. Without additional targeted support as provided under CFAP, I am concerned about the long-term strength of New Hampshire's molluscan shellfish aquaculture sector.

Sec. 12005 of the CARES Act allocates \$300 million in financial assistance to fisheries, divided between commercial fishing, recreational fishing, aquaculture operations, processors, and other businesses. Of these funds, NH fisheries received slightly over \$2.7 million. Unfortunately, NOAA's formula for disbursing funds to the eligible entities does not adequately support the needs of Granite State aquaculture producers, who are set to receive less than \$700 per operation.

As you know, USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) enables agricultural producers to apply for direct payments to offset the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to qualify, eligible agricultural producers must have suffered a 5% or greater price decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, recent estimates suggest that the molluscan shellfish industry would easily meet this threshold with an estimated 90% decrease in sales.

Regrettably, USDA has issued guidance outlining that qualified molluscan shellfish and marine algae aquaculture producers are categorically ineligible for CFAP, even as nonsalmonid marine finfish grown in marine waters remain eligible. I urge you to reconsider this decision and provide CFAP eligibility for these aquaculture producers. Molluscan shellfish and marine algae

aquaculture producers have experienced uniquely negative economic impacts. They need access to the targeted relief provided by CFAP to weather this pandemic and remain poised for future growth.

I urge you to reconsider your decision to exclude molluscan shellfish and marine algae aquaculture producers from coverage under CFAP. This targeted expansion would have an outsize positive impact on protecting the long-term vitality of a burgeoning industry that has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Pappas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Pappas
Member of Congress