

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 11, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
The United States House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
The United States House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your continued efforts to support our coastal communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the health and economic crisis rages on, our coastal and Great Lakes communities, especially those employed in the marine and aquaculture industries, are feeling the consequences. These communities cite the support they have received from Sea Grant programs as lifelines during these uncertain times. As Congress moves to negotiate further COVID-19 relief packages, we urge you to include at least \$100 million in emergency funding to the National Sea Grant College Program so that it can continue to support our coastal communities.

Due to the public health decisions made to limit the spread of COVID-19, seafood and aquaculture producers across the nation have been experiencing severe hardships due to decreased demands for their products. Nationwide, marine exports and catches have decreased significantly, especially due to decreases in sales to restaurants and exports. With lower profits, fisheries across the country have had to make cuts throughout their operations, threatening not only short-term economic strength but also the long-term viability of the sector. Sea Grant's ability to leverage its limited funding to provide outsize and locally-tailored support to our coastal and Great Lakes constituents and the seafood and aquaculture industries has been a lifeline to coastal and Great Lakes communities across our nation. Through the direct allocation of funds to Sea Grant, we can ensure that fisheries across the nation are able to overcome the pandemic.

Sea Grant has a strong track record of efficiently leveraging federal funds to support our coastal communities. In 2019, Sea Grant's \$80 million in Federal funding generated a \$412.4 million economic benefit and supported 10,404 jobs and 998 businesses. In addition, the structure of Sea Grant enables it to effectively tailor its programs and resources to address the most pressing needs of each state. The supplemental funding would enable Sea Grant and their partners to:

- Support fishers and others by providing information on available assistance and other services to help them sustain and revive their businesses.
- Collaborate with local decision makers using digital resources to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on coastal and Great Lakes communities.
- Assist coastal business owners in tourism and other coastal-dependent industries apply for assistance; and
- Provide educators with materials to support students in finding ways to engage in learning under COVID-19 imposed educational limitations.

That is why we respectfully ask that any future relief packages allocate at least \$100 million in emergency funding for Sea Grant. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sea Grant has redirected \$3.4 million in Federal funding to support rapid response initiatives including identifying specific barriers to the seafood supply chain, conducting fishing industry needs assessments, and purchasing aquaculture-grown oysters for ecosystem restoration. These efforts have already had a profound positive impact on our coastal communities, but we must do more to provide dedicated, emergency funding so that Sea Grant can ensure our coastal and Great Lakes communities and our seafood and aquaculture industries have the support they need to be poised to emerge from this pandemic stronger than ever.

Coastal communities, and in particular the aquaculture industry, have received critical support from Sea Grant throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As the COVID-19 pandemic persists, we urge Congressional leadership to provide at least \$100 million in additional funding to Sea Grant in any subsequent relief package. We thank you for your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you on an economic recovery package that puts the needs of our coastal and Great Lakes communities first.

Sincerely,



CHRIS PAPPAS
Member of Congress

PETER A. DEFAZIO
Member of Congress

ED CASE
Member of Congress

ANN MCLANE KUSTER
Member of Congress

DON YOUNG
Member of Congress

DAVID N. CICILLINE
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