



BLUE WATER FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

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The Honorable Cory A. Booker
United States Senate
359 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: "Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act of 2016" (S-3095)

Dear Senator Booker,

I write to you today in opposition to the Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act of 2016 which is now pending before the U.S. Senate. While at first glance this legislation may appear to advance important shark conservation objectives, a closer look at the true issues reveals that it is actually counterproductive to conservation.

I am writing on behalf of Blue Water Fishermen's Association – a trade association that has represented the pelagic longline sector of the domestic Atlantic Highly Migratory Species fishery and its associated support businesses since 1990. Our fishery is responsible for the catches of the overwhelming majority of U.S. Atlantic swordfish and tunas consumed by Americans. I have personally been involved in this fishery since 1981 and a resident of our state since 1975. In addition, I currently serve as the Vice-Chair, and a commercial member, of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, a Federal Advisory Committee which advises the Secretary of Commerce on marine fisheries matters. I am also an appointed member and active participant on the ICCAT Advisory Committee, Atlantic HMS Advisory Panel, and the Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Team. These comments echo the thoughts of many people and businesses involved in the domestic seafood industry, reaching far beyond the membership of BWFA.

We oppose this bill because it will increase legislative discards of shark fins in those shark species which are sustainably harvested, and will continue to be sustainably harvested in accordance with U.S. law. Unlike what some would lead one to believe, not all shark species are in jeopardy; many species have healthy stocks from which a reasonable, sustainable harvest is permitted.

As you know, the United States is the world's leader in shark conservation measures, and our fishermen have led the way to promote practical, effective, and responsible shark conservation. In 1993, the wasteful practice of at-sea shark finning was

prohibited for U.S. Atlantic fishermen. One of the positive results of this prohibition was the development of markets for shark meat which may have previously been thrown away at-sea due to the lack of such a market. These sharks are managed sustainably in accordance with to the Shark Conservation Act, Magnuson-Stevens Act, High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act, and many species have had international review and management recommendations made by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas which were implemented pursuant to the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act.

If enacted, this pending legislation would create a new type of wasteful shark finning. With this new type of finning, instead of shark fins being retained at sea and the shark meat being discarded, as was prohibited in 1993, the meat will be retained and fins discarded upon landing. These fins will end up in dumpsters along our Nation's coastlines. This needless waste of sustainably harvested food which is valued by Asian-Americans and others is senseless, and would have economic consequences for our Nation's commercial fishermen. One of our Nation's great strengths is in our diversity, and a traditional food enjoyed by many of our citizens, including those in the Asian-American community, should not be prohibited if it can be responsibly harvested by Americans.

As we have for decades, America continues to lead the way in shark conservation. But this is not the way to build on that lead. In fact, by eliminating these responsibly harvested shark fins from U.S. commerce, this bill may increase the practice of finning – which is not adequately prohibited/enforced in many foreign nations – to meet international market demand for shark fins. A more productive measure, and one that we would wholeheartedly support, would be to strengthen current prohibitions on the import of sharks, including their fins, from nations that engage in the irresponsible practices of targeting stocks of shark that cannot be harvested responsibly and/or engaging in at-sea finning. This would both protect U.S. markets from irresponsibly-harvested shark fins and also encourage non-responsible foreign nations to become compliant in order to access the U.S. marketplace. We urge you and your colleagues in the Senate to look at the bill in this context and strongly consider amending the bill to focus on solutions that will make a real difference both here and abroad.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly or refer your staff to me. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully,



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