

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 14, 2016

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Senate Appropriations Committee
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Senate Appropriations Committee
128 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Senator Shaheen:

We write to urge you to provide funding for the Fishing Safety Training Grant Program and Fishing Safety Research Grant Program as you develop the Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2017.

The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 (CGAA) imposed new safety requirements, which took effect in 2015, on commercial fishermen who operate vessels beyond three nautical miles offshore. Specifically, individuals in charge of such vessels must now complete a safety and survival training program to help ensure their competency in emergency situations. Prior to this change, only those in command of commercial fishing vessels operating beyond 13 nautical miles of the shore needed to have such certifications. The recent expansion of the applicable nautical area has dramatically increased the number of vessels and fishermen affected. In Maine, for example, only 20 percent of federally permitted lobster vessels were affected under the old requirements, now 80 percent are affected.

Safety and survival training is critically important for fishermen who, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, work in the deadliest industry in America and are 37 times more likely to die on the job than a police officer. This training undoubtedly saves lives. Just last year in Alaska, where fishing safety and survival training requirements similar to those in the CGAA were implemented by the state, no fishermen were lost in vessel-related incidents for the first time in recorded history. In addition to priceless lives, an investment in these training programs also stands to save millions of taxpayer dollars annually by helping to reduce rescue expenses. In fact, the cost savings associated with preventing just one typical search and rescue operation is more than it would cost to run the program in New England for an entire year. A USCG search and rescue easily costs \$200,000 per day, and multiday searches can cost upwards of \$1.5 million.

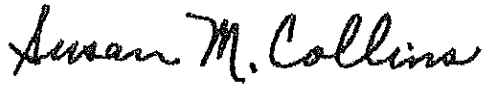
The safety and survival of our commercial fishermen are of the utmost importance, and we fully support the expansion of safety training requirements. We are concerned, however, that

the high costs of this required training will fall entirely on the fishing families in our states who continue to experience tremendous financial strain.

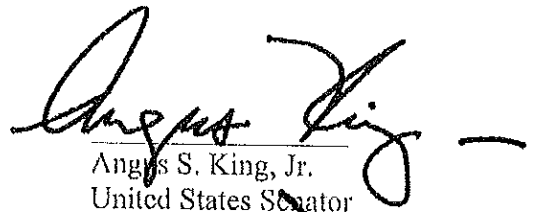
The CGAA authorized two competitive grant programs to provide safety training and assist commercial fishing vessel operators with compliance. Both the Fishing Safety Training Grant Program and the Fishing Safety Research Grant Program were authorized at a level of \$3 million. Funding these two critical grant programs may help to fill dangerous gaps left by cuts to initiatives like the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Commercial Fishing Safety Program.

In light of the new mandate imposed on commercial fishermen by the CGAA and cuts to funding for similar and complimentary support services within NIOSH, we respectfully request that you provide robust funding for these life-saving grant programs in fiscal year 2017.

Sincerely,



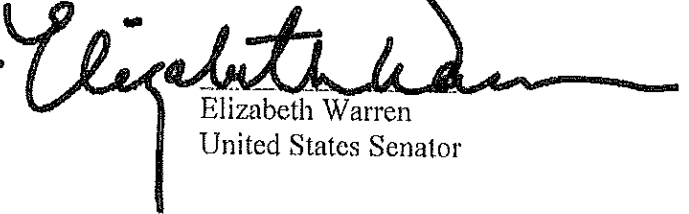
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



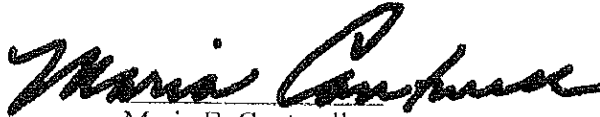
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Maria E. Cantwell
United States Senator