Mr. Wilbur Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

I write to express my displeasure with NOAA Fisheries proposal to implement “conservation equivalency” for the 2019 recreational black sea bass season and to express my strong support for the proposal to reopen the fishery for the months of February and January (MRIP Wave 1). The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s (MAFMC) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s (ASFMC) decision to maintain the status quo and not liberalize the Recreational Harvest Limits (RHLs) for black sea bass in the summer flounder, scup and black sea bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) unfairly penalizes New York fisherman and does not accurately reflect the health of the stock.

As I have previously stated, the current black sea bass recreational fishery regulatory regime is unfair, based on poor science, arbitrary and inequitable for the anglers on Long Island and in the state of New York. In April I wrote in support of the Northern Region’s appeal to the ASMFC’s regional allocation of the black sea bass RHL which unfairly imposed cuts on New York anglers while liberalizing other regions.

I was pleased when the ASMFC decided to reverse its decision to unfairly penalize recreational fisherman in New York who have already made significant concessions to help rebuild the black sea bass fishery but have not reaped the benefits.

I also write in support of the proposal to reopen the black sea bass recreational fishery for MRIP Wave 1 but suggest a full reopening of the fishery for both January and February; the current proposal would only reopen February. According to data provided by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center “black seabass biomass continues to be high and the 2015 year class appears to be above average in both the northern and southern surveys.” Given the positive data, it is time for these particular penalties on New York fisherman to wind down and end.

Thank you in advance for your attention to my request. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact my staff.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator