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April 23, 2024

Senator Jeanne Shaheen  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Science and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran,

Stronger America Through Seafood, a coalition of industry partners representing the seafood supply chain, is working in support of increased U.S. production of healthful, sustainable, and affordable seafood. We are writing today to request that you support \$25 million for NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service' (NMFS) Office of Aquaculture and \$14.08 million for NOAA's Ocean and Atmospheric Research (OAR) for the Sea Grant Aquaculture Research program in the fiscal year 2025 Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) Appropriations Act. We also request the language below be included in the related Explanatory Statement:

“The Committee recognizes the significant potential for development of American offshore aquaculture to increase U.S. production of healthful, sustainable and affordable seafood. As the fastest growing food production sector in the world, responsible aquaculture development presents opportunities for meaningful economic growth in coastal communities and among their supply chain partners, while ensuring that Americans have access to responsibly farmed local seafood. The National Marine Fisheries Service Aquaculture program's 5-Year strategic plan for aquaculture will support a U.S. aquaculture industry as part of a competitive domestic seafood sector. The Committee fully supports the activities of the Aquaculture Program and includes \$25,000,000 to implement this strategic plan, including continued work on Aquaculture Opportunity Areas, environmental assessments, science-based tools and modeling and increased economic development programs.”

Aquaculture is the fastest growing food production sector in the world and is responsible for nearly all global seafood supply growth since the 1990s. With half of all seafood consumed today being farm raised, aquaculture presents a unique opportunity to build an American seafood industry that can support a diverse workforce, enhance sustainable ecosystems and guarantee healthful, locally sourced protein for American consumers.

Today, the U.S. lags far behind the rest of the world in farmed seafood production, resulting in the U.S. importing up to 85% of its seafood. The single biggest reason is the lack of a clear regulatory pathway for permitting new projects, particularly offshore. This challenging reality has forced many American businesses to invest in other countries.

As you may know, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)'s Aquaculture Program is implementing a five-year strategic plan laying out a framework to "help achieve a robust, thriving, and diverse U.S. aquaculture industry as part of a resilient seafood sector." They continue to actively coordinate across agencies towards a comprehensive regulatory foundation for aquaculture. This process includes siting analysis for future Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) in federal waters, interagency coordination on National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) review and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), development of science-based tools and modeling, and associated economic development programs like workforce training and community planning that will ensure the economic benefits of aquaculture are realized across all stakeholder groups. Further, the Fiscal Year 2024 CJS Appropriations bill provided for a new Cooperative Institute (CI) to support the sustainable development of aquaculture in the U.S. to address the seafood import deficit and benefit the economy. The CI will help the agency fulfill the tenets of the NOAA Aquaculture Strategic Plan.

The program needs additional funds to adequately fulfill its mission, and we believe a funding level of \$25 million will meet these needs.

In addition, we seek \$14.08 million in funding for Sea Grant Aquaculture Research. The President's Fiscal Year 25 budget request zeroes out this important program that provides marine aquaculture research and development. SATS supports this program for its important work to develop and commercialize new technologies for finfish aquaculture and to engineer ocean-based infrastructure.

By prioritizing domestic aquaculture, you will support the growth of an American seafood community that is resilient to economic and climate changes and is part of a holistic approach to a greater sustainable food strategy.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you to ensure domestic aquaculture production is a priority now for a secure future.

Respectfully,

Drue Banta Winters  
Campaign Manager  
Stronger America Through Seafood

**Stronger America Through Seafood**  
*Securing a stronger America through increased U.S. production  
of healthful, sustainable, and affordable seafood.*