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April 22, 2013

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Chair, House Budget Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Ryan and Chairwoman Murray:

I am writing to request your leadership and assistance during a time of regional and national fishery crisis. It is well documented that in New England, the Gulf Coast and the Pacific Northwest, fishermen in numerous states are facing near catastrophic economic situations. Indeed, last September, the Department of Commerce issued a fishery resource disaster for the Northeast groundfish fishery, authorizing Congress to appropriate assistance for these communities in need. As you finalize the fiscal year 2014 budget, I ask that you include this crucial and overdue aid for our fishing communities.

Here in New England the resource disaster has already taken its toll on our fishing community. Now, although our fishermen have adhered to catch limits over the past few years, stocks are not rebuilding and they are bracing for even steeper cuts to be implemented on May 1st, which I have asked NOAA to reconsider. This is threatening not only the livelihoods of our commercial fleet, but the fabric of our fishing communities. In the historic Port of Gloucester, for example, our agencies continue to receive reports that fishing families are relying on food donations and are grappling with the stress of the current groundfish disaster. This is not just a regional

issue. In addition to the impact on our fishing communities in the Northeast, this disaster is impacting communities and consumers throughout the nation.

The recently passed Senate 2014 budget resolution included an amendment that allows appropriations in the federal budget to provide this much needed disaster assistance to our fishing community in Massachusetts and across the region. This bipartisan amendment, which was sponsored by Senators Elizabeth Warren and Lisa Murkowski, passed by unanimous consent and is an important step toward providing the assistance our fishing industry both in Massachusetts and throughout the country needs and deserves.

As I continue to work with all stakeholders and federal partners to obtain more immediate financial assistance, I ask that you include this long overdue disaster aid in your final budget for fiscal year 2014. I hope you share my concern about the struggles of our fishing industry and the men and women who devote their lives to it. Including the disaster assistance in your budget will send a strong, bipartisan message of support to our fishing communities during this difficult economic time.

Sincerely,

