

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 26, 2018

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Senate Appropriations Committee
131 Dirksen Senate office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Chairman Capito and Ranking Member Tester,

As the Subcommittee begins deliberations on the Fiscal Year 2019 Homeland Security Appropriations legislation, we urge you to provide robust funding for the Fishing Safety Training Grant Program and Fishing Safety Research Grant Program.

The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 (CGAA) imposed new safety requirements in 2015 on commercial fishermen who operate vessels beyond three nautical miles offshore. Specifically, individuals in charge of such vessels must complete a safety and survival training program to help ensure competency in emergency situations. Prior to this change, only those in command of commercial fishing vessels operating beyond thirteen nautical miles offshore needed to have such certifications. The expansion of the applicable nautical area 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.

The CGAA authorized two competitive grant programs to provide safety training and assist commercial fishing vessel operators with achieving compliance. Both the Fishing Safety Training Grant Program and the Fishing Safety Research Grant Program were authorized at a level of \$3 million in Fiscal Year 2017.

Safety and survival training is critically important for fishermen who, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, work in the deadliest industry in America. Fishermen are thirty-seven times more likely to die on the job than a police officer. Safety and survival training saves lives and can help the commercial fishing industry avoid tragedies like the 1991 sinking of the Gloucester-based *Andrea Gail*, made famous by the movie "A Perfect Storm." In 2016, the state of Alaska implemented fishing safety and survival training requirements similar to those in the CGAA, and no fishermen were lost in vessel-related incidents during that year for the first time in recorded history.

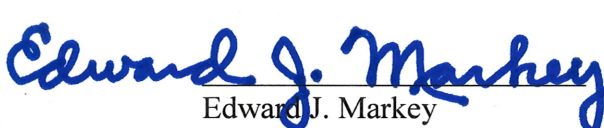
In addition to saving priceless lives, an investment in these training programs can save millions of taxpayer dollars annually by helping to reduce rescue expenses. In fact, the cost savings associated with preventing just one typical search and rescue operation is more than it would cost to run the program in New England for an entire year. USCG search and rescue operations can


cost hundreds of thousands of dollars per day, and multiday searches can cost upwards of \$1.5 million.

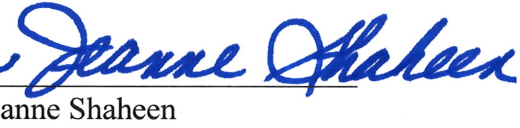
Safety and survival trainings for the commercial fishing industry help prevent tragedies and save taxpayers millions of dollars. We respectfully request that you continue to provide stable and robust funding for these life-saving grant programs in fiscal year 2019.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

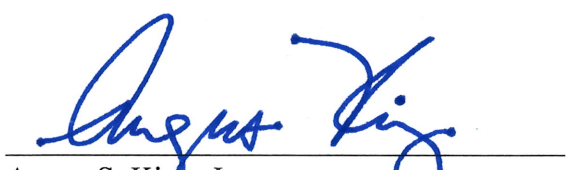

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

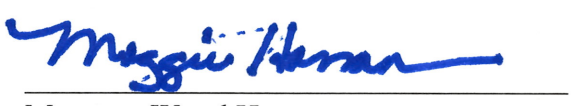

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