

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 4, 2023

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

We appreciate your commitment to supporting fisheries management and the U.S. seafood market. On March 16, 2023, the State of Maryland submitted its request to the U.S. Department of Commerce for a fishery resource disaster declaration for multiple Chesapeake Bay species impacted by aquatic invasive species. We urge you to conduct an efficient, comprehensive review of all the required information needed to make a positive determination.

Our state is a leading partner in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, designed to restore this national treasure and natural resource. One of the goals of the agreement, Sustainable Fisheries, is to protect, restore, and enhance finfish, shellfish, and other living resources, their habitats and ecological relationships to sustain all fisheries, and provide for a balanced ecosystem in the watershed. This goal is being undermined by rapid range expansion and population growth of invasive species, particularly of blue catfish, with deleterious impacts on the ecology of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Blue catfish are generalist feeders that prey on a wide variety of local species, including those of economic importance and conservation concern.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 included at Division S, Title II, the Fishery Resource Disasters Improvement Act, facilitating the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) administration of fisheries disaster assistance. The law, enacted on a bipartisan basis, provides federal funding for dedicated NOAA personnel to accelerate review. We ask that you prioritize Maryland's request when implementing these additional resources.

Timely determination of a commercial fishery failure offers a significant federal tool to provide economic assistance to Maryland fishery participants, coastal communities, and predominantly small seafood businesses. Thank you for your attention to this urgent request.

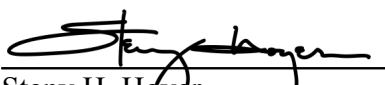
Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



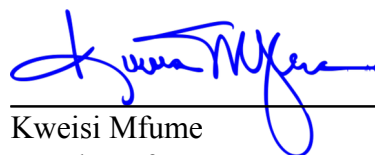
Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress



C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress



John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



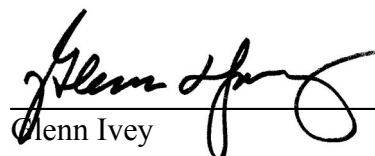
Andy Harris, M.D.
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



David J. Trone
Member of Congress



Glenn Ivey
Member of Congress