



September 20, 2022

The Hon. Raúl M. Grijalva  
Chairman  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Hon. Bruce Westerman  
Ranking Member  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1329 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman:

We write in order to express our opposition to the Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act of 2021, H.R. 4690. We oppose H.R. 4690 in its current form, and believe thoroughgoing changes are required before the bill should advance through the legislative process.

Collectively, our associations account for a substantial portion of the nation's commercial seafood supply chain, from beginning to end. Our companies include vessel owners, harvesters, processors, distributors, restaurants, retailers, and big box outlets. A stable supply of seafood from a range of sources—including from domestic wild-capture fisheries—is critical to ensure our companies can continue to produce and offer the products necessary to meet the nation's growing appetite for wholesome, nutritious finfish and shellfish. If enacted into law, H.R. 4690 would upend the successful Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act ("MSA" or "Magnuson-Stevens") and thereby pose a considerable threat to that supply. We believe enactment of H.R. 4690 would harm American seafood consumers by constraining supply, raising consumer prices, and exacerbating the supply chain uncertainty that continues to undermine the food industry.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act's success is widely acknowledged, and our members have a longstanding interest in safeguarding and extending that success. Under the framework established by the MSA (and largely unaltered since), scientists and managers work together to minimize overfishing, conserve fishery resources, and achieve optimum yield. This has helped to ensure a consistent supply of sustainable American seafood to the marketplace, which in turn

has allowed retailers and seafood restaurants to invest and innovate at the seafood counter, in the frozen aisle, and in food service outlets of all kinds. American consumers as a direct result can choose from an abundance of affordable and nutritious seafood options.

With respect, H.R. 4690 would put that success at risk by needlessly restricting fishing opportunities and inviting protracted litigation. We are especially concerned by H.R. 4690's proposed new requirements relating to forage fish protection, essential fish habitat conservation, and bycatch avoidance. In each case, the existing responsibility of fishery managers to balance complex competing interests would be curtailed. Working under rigid new strictures, fishery managers—or judges responding to the claims of plaintiffs—would shut down or severely restrict some of our nation's largest commercial fisheries to satisfy narrow legislative mandates and for reasons unrelated to marine ecosystem health.

This would be harmful for the hundreds of millions of American consumers we serve. Now more than ever, legislators should be keenly aware of the relationship between food supply disruptions and prices paid by consumers for groceries and restaurant meals. Food costs in the United States have increased by 11.4 percent in the last year alone, the highest rate of food inflation since 1979. This inflation is highly regressive, disproportionately harming lower-income families and in some cases limiting the seafood choices they would otherwise enjoy. It is critical to avoid further hardship for American families, especially in the form of legislation that risks limiting reliable supplies of U.S.-harvested products whose sustainability is beyond question.

Thank you for taking our concerns into account. We would welcome the chance to share more perspectives with you and your staff at the appropriate time.

Sincerely,

National Fisheries Institute  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Restaurant Association  
National Retail Federation