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August 29, 2023

Chairman Debbie Stabenow
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member John Boozman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman:

We write to express concern about a provision in The Improving ARCTIC Act, a Farm Bill amendment introduced by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), which seeks to prohibit finfish aquaculture in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. Stronger America Through Seafood (SATS), a coalition of industry partners representing the seafood supply chain, works in support of increased U.S. production of healthful, sustainable, and affordable seafood.

This provision would be devastating for offshore aquaculture and the many industries including the agricultural industry that would benefit from a robust, sustainable offshore aquaculture industry. SATS believes the path forward for offshore aquaculture in U.S. waters is best discussed in the committee of jurisdiction for this issue, the Committee on Commerce, Justice and Science.

Offshore aquaculture is one of the fastest growing, sustainable forms of food production in the world and has the unique potential to improve American food security and nutrition, enhance coastal resiliency, create quality jobs, help restore species and habitats, and ensure that seafood (both wild-caught and farmed) continues to be an important part of the global food supply.

U.S. aquaculture is currently constrained by the absence of an efficient and affordable permitting process, particularly in U.S. federal waters. The bipartisan "*Advancing the Quality and Understanding of American Aquaculture Act*" (S. 1861) or the "*AQUAA Act*" was introduced in June by Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) to provide a framework for a predictable regulatory process that would facilitate an environmentally sound and sustainable offshore aquaculture industry. This bill has been referred to the Commerce Committee for consideration.

The demand for seafood is growing and wild capture fisheries alone are unlikely to meet the demand and remain sustainable. The effects of climate change are already impacting wild capture fisheries and will undoubtedly create more disruptions in the seafood industry. Aquaculture, in complement with wild harvest, will ensure a steady supply of seafood regularly comes into ports, creating new job opportunities and providing an economic engine for coastal communities and farm states alike.

Over the last 20 years, advances in science and technology have significantly reduced the environmental footprint of offshore aquaculture. With high-tech solutions such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and underwater cameras, farmers can monitor fish health, water quality, and feeding to benefit the environment and the bottom-line. Through sophisticated computer modeling, farms can be properly sited to reduce user conflicts and water quality impacts. Carefully formulated aqua feeds now include proteins from farm-grown crops, like soybeans, corn, peas, wheat, barley, and rice, as well as oils from soybean, canola, and flaxseed to meet the dietary needs of fish, thus reducing wild fish inputs. Precision feeding reduces fish waste and excess feed from impacting water quality and the water bottom. Fish health is largely treated with vaccines and probiotics leaving antibiotics as a last resort.

The expansion of offshore aquaculture would create new opportunities throughout the seafood supply chain from coast to coast, including in seafood processing, retail and more. Working waterfronts benefit from a steady supply of seafood coming into ports from both wild capture and farm-raised fish and American farmers would have an expanded market for plant-based inputs into high-quality fish feeds.

We urge you to defer the consideration of offshore aquaculture to the appropriate committee. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Drue Banta Winters
Campaign Manager