

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 19, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write regarding President Trump's June 24 memorandum titled "Memorandum on Protecting the United States Lobster Industry." This memorandum directed you to "consider taking appropriate action, to the extent permitted by applicable law, to provide assistance to fishermen and producers in the United States lobster industry that continue to be harmed by China's retaliatory tariffs" within 60 days. We were encouraged by this directive, given that we urged President Trump to make lobstermen eligible for this aid more than a year ago.

This 60-day period is now drawing to a close, but the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has yet to take any further action. We urge you to keep the President's promise and immediately assist the thousands of Mainers whose livelihoods depend on this critical industry.

As you know, Maine's lobster industry has been and continues to be significantly impacted by China's retaliatory tariffs. A few years ago, U.S. lobster exports to China were growing rapidly, reaching \$128.5 million in 2017. However, this trend abruptly reversed after China imposed these tariffs in July 2018. The following year, lobster exports to China fell by nearly 50 percent. Despite making commitments to increase purchases, China bought only \$25.9 million of U.S. lobster during the first half of 2020, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

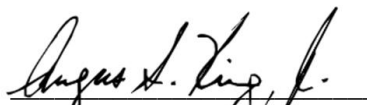
Unlike other types of food producers who were affected by retaliatory tariffs and received prompt federal relief, Maine's lobstermen were not eligible for the \$28 billion in trade mitigation aid that USDA authorized in 2018 and 2019. With no end to these tariffs in sight and the new burden of the COVID-19 pandemic also weighing heavily on the industry, it is imperative that Maine's lobster producers receive immediate support from the Department.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and we look forward to USDA's prompt action.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Jared F. Golden
Member of Congress