



Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association

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Sent via email: jointcmte-Agriculture@malegislature.gov

Chair Senator Dylan A. Fernandes
Joint Committee on Agriculture
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24 Beacon St. Room 519
Boston, MA 02133

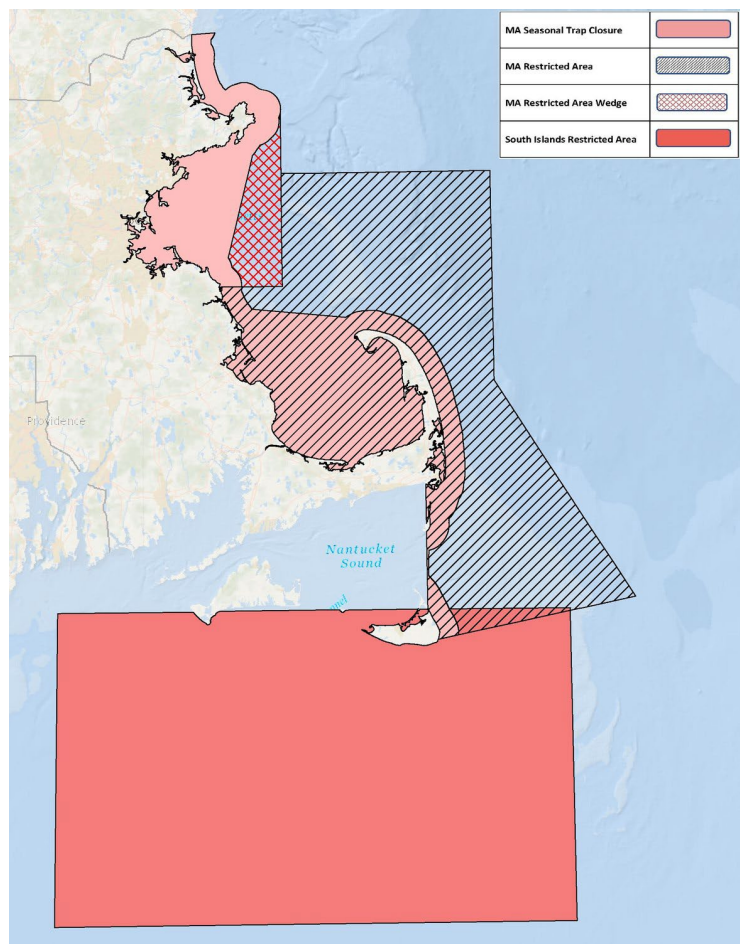
Re: S.68 & H.110 An Act Relative to Lobstering Closure Mitigation

Dear Chair Fernandes,

The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association (MLA) respectfully submits this letter of comment on behalf of its 1800 members in support of *S.68 & H.110 An Act Relative to Lobster Closure Mitigation* (Act).

Commercial lobstering is one of the most historic and iconic fisheries, employs thousands of people and now more than ever, the commercial lobstermen of the Commonwealth need your help to survive.

Over the last several years the commercial lobstermen, here in the Commonwealth, have been at the forefront of conservation for Right Whales. Over 12,000 square miles of closed waters and with no State waters left open in February, March, April up until May 15th.



These closed months are not the only time commercial lobstermen are restricted from earning a living because it takes them one month to set gear and one month to remove that same gear. This extends the loss of lobster harvesting to five months.

In 2023 the ~750 active commercial lobstermen in Massachusetts landed 15,904,951 pounds of American Lobster with an ex-vessel value of \$99,087,846. Given that the cost of doing business has increased upwards of 300% and, the average price per pound in 2023 was comparable to the price in the 1990's along with a shortened season, how can anyone survive.

Established in 1963, the MLA is a member-driven organization that accepts and supports the interdependence of species conservation and the members' collective economic interests. The MLA continues to work conscientiously through the management process with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries, New England Fisheries Management Council, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration to ensure the continued sustainability and profitability of the resources in which our fishermen are engaged in.

This Act will establish a program that will be administered by the Department of Unemployment Assistance. This program would be a similar program to the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program. The MLA will be available to assist and answer any questions with this program in any way possible to ensure the program's success.

The MLA does not see this Act relative to lobstering closure mitigation as a forever fund. This Act is meant to help those commercial lobstermen who are not yet incorporated to become incorporated. The MLA will work with commercial lobstermen over a three-year period to become incorporated through a series of seminars once the Act is passed.

The commercial lobstermen of the Commonwealth need the passage of S.68 & H. 110 An Act Relative to Lobstering Closure Mitigation. The passage of this Act is an investment in the survival of the commercial lobster fishery to ensure it will be here for generations to come.

Thank you for your thoughtful deliberation and continued support for the Commonwealths commercial lobstermen.

Kind regards,

Beth Casoni

Executive Director