



Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association

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October 25, 2025

Sent via email: Noah.Laren@mahouse.gov

Representative Kenneth P. Sweezy &
Patrick Joseph Kearney
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02133

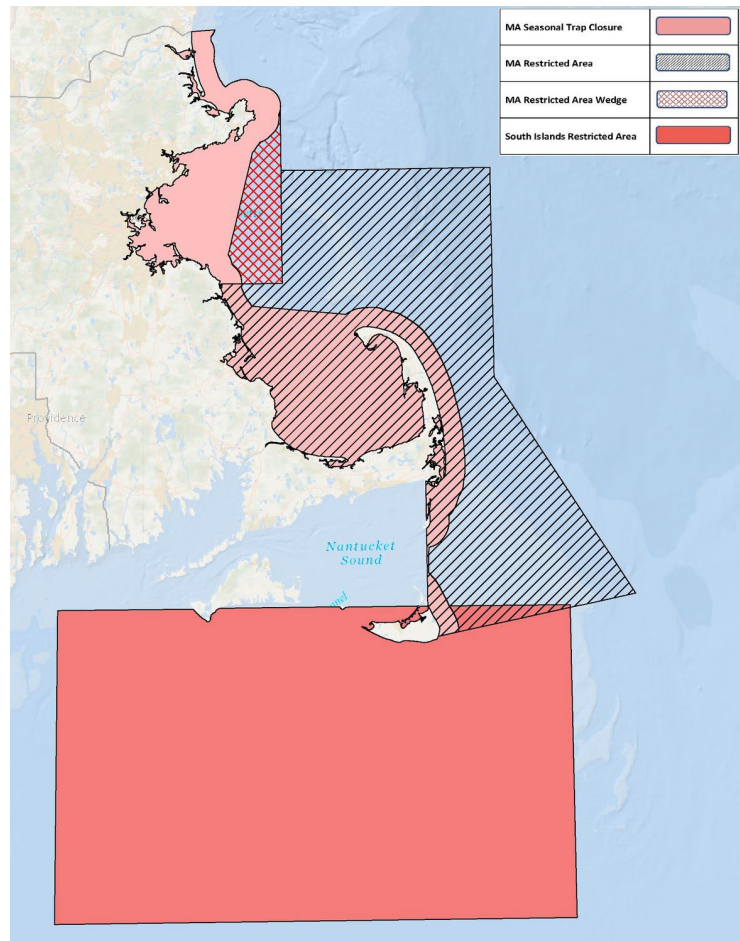
Re: **H.2177 An Act to provide economic security for fishing industry participants.**

Dear Representatives, Sweezy & Kearney,

The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association (MLA) respectfully submits this letter of comment on behalf of our 1,800 members in **strong support of H.2177 – An Act to Provide Economic Security for Fishing Industry Participants** (“the Act”).

Commercial lobstering is one of the most historic and iconic fisheries in the Commonwealth. supports thousands of jobs and is deeply woven into the fabric of our coastal communities. Now, more than ever, our commercial lobstermen need your help to survive.

Over the past several years, Massachusetts commercial lobstermen have been leaders in Right Whale conservation. In total, more than **12,000 square miles** of water have been closed to protect the species, and as of now, **all state waters are closed from February 1st through May 1st and up to May 15th if needed.**



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However, the impact of these closures extends far beyond those months. Due to the time it takes to both set and retrieve gear; commercial lobstermen are effectively restricted from harvesting lobster for **nearly five months** each year.

In 2023, Massachusetts' approximately **750 active commercial lobstermen** landed **15,904,951 pounds** of American lobster, with an ex-vessel value of **\$99,087,846**. Despite this, the cost of doing business has skyrocketed—up more than **300%**—while the price per pound remains roughly **equivalent to 1990s levels**. Combine this with a dramatically shortened season, and the question becomes: **How can anyone continue to operate under these conditions?**

Established in 1963, the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association is a member-driven organization that supports both **species conservation** and the **economic sustainability** of its members. We work diligently and collaboratively with state and federal agencies, including:

- The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
- The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
- The New England Fishery Management Council
- The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

We are committed to sustainable fisheries management and to preserving the viability of our members' livelihoods.

The passage of this Act is a critical step forward. It would establish a program, administered by the Department of Unemployment Assistance, similar to the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program. This program will provide direct support to commercial lobstermen during forced closures, helping to stabilize this essential sector of our economy.

The MLA stands ready to assist in any way necessary to ensure the program's successful implementation.

Importantly, **we do not view this Act as a permanent solution** or a "forever fund." Rather, it is a transitional tool intended to help independent commercial lobstermen become incorporated. Once passed, the MLA will launch a three-year seminar series to help these fishermen navigate incorporation and better prepare for future regulatory and economic challenges.

The commercial lobstermen of Massachusetts urgently need the passage of **H.2177** and the companion bills **S.68—An Act Relative to Lobstering Closure Mitigation**. This is not just an act of support, it is an investment in the survival of the commercial lobster fishery, and in ensuring that this vital industry remains a cornerstone of the Commonwealth's economy for generations to come.

We thank you for your thoughtful consideration and your continued support of Massachusetts' commercial lobstermen.

Kind regards,

Beth Casoni

Executive Director