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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

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COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
CHAIR
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LABOR, AND PENSIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE
ON INTELLIGENCE

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Jamieson Greer
United States Trade Representative
600 Seventeenth Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Secretary Lutnick and Ambassador Greer:

The Trump Administration has given a commitment to protect Maine's lobstering industry. Secretary Lutnick, I especially appreciated your testimony earlier this year that this Administration considers Maine's lobstering industry to be an "American treasure." With that commitment in mind, I write to urge you to address the hardship that tariffs have imposed on lobstermen in Maine. Lobstering has become a more expensive profession in recent years as lobstermen's earnings per pound in 2024 decreased to some of the lowest levels in the past 75 years, and I continue to hear from lobstermen about the ways that tariffs have exacerbated this problem.

Tariffs have contributed to higher prices on nearly all equipment that lobstermen use, including traps, clips, rings, and hoops, which have increased in cost due to the current 50 percent tariff rate applied on most imported steel and aluminum. Lobstermen have also faced tariffs on shrimp mesh and special sink and float ropes sourced from India. Even the bait used has been affected by tariffs, resulting in higher prices for lobstermen, including tariffs on redfish from Iceland, Germany, and Portugal; cod from Iceland; rockfish from Norway, Iceland, and Greenland; and monkfish from Iceland. Many of these products are not easily sourced domestically. For instance, the annual catch limit for Atlantic herring – an American-caught lobster bait – was supposed to be increased earlier this year, but this decision has been delayed. At this time, Maine-caught lobster bait is not easily available.

To address this problem, I urge the Administration to re-open an exclusion process for imported steel and aluminum, which the Administration terminated earlier this year. As trade negotiations continue, I encourage you to keep these hardships in mind and continue to work with my office on trade policies affecting the lobster industry.

Thank you for your consideration and your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator