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September 4, 2015

Kathryn Sullivan
NOAA Administrator and Under Secretary
Of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Sullivan:

I write to express my deep concerns over recent reports about the grave human rights abuses within the fishing industry, which seems to operate without sufficient regulation. A recent series by *The New York Times*, 'The Outlaw Ocean', found numerous examples of human trafficking, violence, and slave-like conditions on multiple fishing vessels. As co-chair of the Congressional Human Trafficking Caucus and sponsor of the Business Supply Chain Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act, I am particularly disturbed by the fact that trafficking and other human rights abuses are part of the supply chain for seafood that is imported into the U.S. According to NOAA's own calculations, 90 percent of the seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported. We must be very vigilant about detecting and minimizing the presence of trafficking and slavery in the fishing industry, and I urge NOAA to combat this scourge.

I commend your agency for recently proposing to publish a list of fish species most at risk for illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. I would urge you to also develop a U.S. Government policy that will help eliminate this criminal activity within our imported fish supply. As a major consumer of seafood, surely the U.S. can influence the prevalence of IUU fishing practices by increasing the standards for its imports. As you know, the Magnuson-Steven Fisheries Conservation and Management Act which became law in 1976 created an Asset Forfeiture Fund (AFF) to expand the agency's ability to develop technologies that effectively screen illegal fish products entering the U.S. I would appreciate any details you can provide about the extent to which fines are levied and collected and how you have used the AFF to conduct investigations and prosecute companies and individuals who profit from illegal imports.

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I understand that NOAA has reduced the number of in-house investigators who would manage cases of fisheries-related violations and is instead training state law enforcement officials to help carry out this responsibility. While training for state partners in this area is well-advised to address domestic IUU fishing activity, I believe that NOAA has a responsibility to strengthen its ability to investigate violations and prosecute offenders on the high seas, where it seems that many of the cases are taking place. A lack of clarity on jurisdiction in international waters allows for greater ease skirting human rights laws through trafficking and other crimes. Does NOAA have specific plans to direct its resources toward careful monitoring of possible illegal activity outside of the U.S. exclusive economic zone?

Thank you again for your work to address and combat IUU fishing on the high seas, which contaminates the U.S. imported seafood supply. In light of the reported stories of slave labor and human trafficking in the international fishing industry, and an increased desire among American consumers to make socially responsible purchases, I hope NOAA will prioritize effective policymaking to address this issue. I appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carolyn B. Maloney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress