

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2024

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
H-310 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Matt Cartwright
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Cartwright:

Thank you for your committee's continued support for North Atlantic right whale conservation and management in recent appropriations cycles. As you consider priorities for the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, the undersigned members firmly request that you support \$5 million in additional funding over FY24 levels for North Atlantic right whale conservation. We also recommend that funds authorized in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 be fully funded moving forward. Specifically, we ask that the committee prioritize innovative fishing gear technologies, including "ropeless" or on-demand gear, to reduce entanglement risk by making whale-safe gear commercially achievable and opening the door to coexistence between this highly endangered whale and a variety of ocean activities. With vessel strikes also posing a dire threat, we further recommend prioritizing funding for the enforcement of rules on North Atlantic right whale slow zones to minimize risk from vessel collisions, as well as the near real-time monitoring and mitigation program authorized in the FY23 NDAA.

With only around 356 whales left, the North Atlantic right whale faces an uphill battle to recovery. Their habitat and migration path often overlaps with commercial fishing grounds and areas of high vessel traffic, which leaves the whales vulnerable to their two leading causes of injury and death, vessel collisions and fishing gear entanglements. The whales that do survive these dangers are stunted in growth by the long-term impact of entanglements. Recent scientific research has estimated that more than 85 percent of North Atlantic right whales have been entangled at least once, and around 60 percent have become entangled in fishing gear multiple times. Due to preventable, human-caused threats, North Atlantic right whale deaths still exceed the birth of new calves at a ratio of three to two. Federal scientists predict that just one death per year could put the species in jeopardy of complete collapse. Adequate conservation and management funding is an urgent need for this species.

We commend the committee's excellent work in boosting funding for North Atlantic right whales in recent appropriations bills and urge it to continue its commitment to protecting this critically endangered species by facilitating a transition to gear, technology, and robust management that enables the long-term coexistence of this endangered species with key sectors of our economy including shipping and commercial fishing.

In particular, we ask for the following within the *Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles, and Other Species* line item, building on the essential funding of this committee last year in protecting North Atlantic right whales:

- \$7,000,000 for surveys and monitoring, including but not limited to underwater acoustic detection technologies, of North Atlantic right whales in Atlantic coastal waters and supporting the near real-time monitoring and mitigation program authorized in the FY23 NDAA. NOAA should also prioritize funding across line offices for efforts to recapitalize the agency's outdated fleet of ships to prevent gaps in essential monitoring and management.

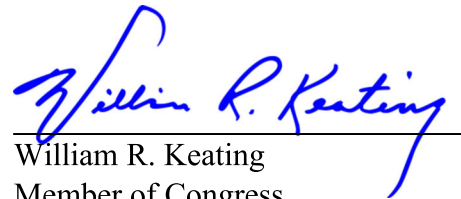
- No less than \$6,000,000 for the development, administration, and acquisition of shore-based, aerial, and on-the-water enforcement capabilities for the United States Coast Guard and NOAA; and the support of the voluntary acquisition of automatic identifications systems by vessel owners affected by the enforcement of vessel speed restrictions.
- \$2,000,000 for disentanglement, stranding response, and necropsy activities.
- 5% cap on the amount of funds NOAA can use internally.
- Additionally, we recommend that funding toward on-demand fishing gear and fishing entanglement protections be prioritized along with the continued, steady funding for a variety of North Atlantic right whale conservation activities.

Funding these programs is essential to ensuring that the North Atlantic right whale avoids extinction. Thank you for considering this request, and we hope to work with you to prioritize sufficient funding for these activities in FY25.

Sincerely,



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress




William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



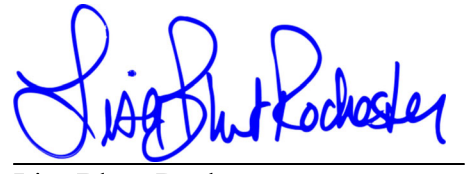
Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman
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Lisa Blunt Rochester
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Mikie Sherrill
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Member of Congress



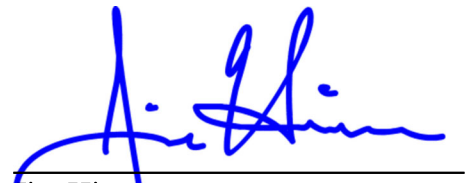
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



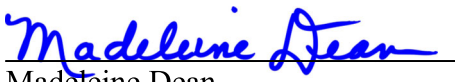
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



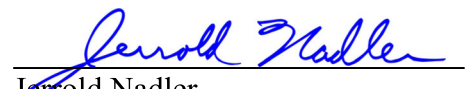
Danny K. Davis
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Jim Himes
Member of Congress




Madeleine Dean
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Jerrold Nadler
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Julia Brownley
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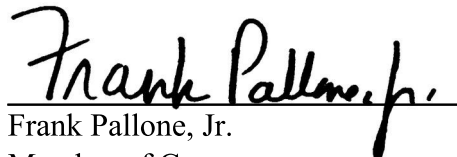
Jahana Hayes
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Gabe Amo
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Richard E. Neal
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Frank Pallone, Jr.
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Stephen F. Lynch
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Jamie Raskin
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Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
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Joe Neguse
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Jason Crow
Member of Congress



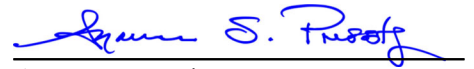
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



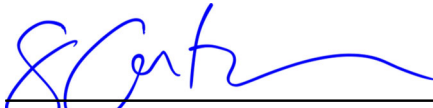
Seth Magaziner
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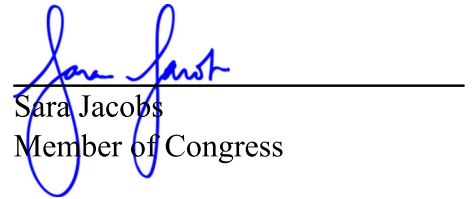
Abigail Davis Spanberger
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Ayanna Pressley
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Sean Casten
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Sara Jacobs
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