Recreational Fishing Alliance
and
United Boatmen
OF NEW JERSEY

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The Honorable Phil Murphy
Governor of New Jersey
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, Director
NJ Office of Emergency Management
New Jersey State Police
P.O. Box 7058
Trenton, New Jersey 08628

RE: Consideration of Measures for New Jersey's Shuttered For-Hire Industry

Dear Governor Murphy and Director Callahan:

I write on behalf of James Donofrio of the Recreational Fishing Alliance, Captain Bob Rush of the United Boatmen of New Jersey, and the customers, crew, captains and owners of the vessels which bring anglers out on the ocean, bays and rivers to fish or otherwise enjoy our marine resources. I write to respectfully ask you to reopen the now shuttered historic for-hire industry, better known as the "head boat" and charter boat industry[1]. The severe impact that closures have had on this business cannot be exaggerated. In order to responsibly address the concerns associated with exposure to the COVID-19 virus, our proposal seeks a measured and cautious reopening, which incorporates protective measures for those who have historically sought to enjoy the marine environment on these boats.

Within the for-hire industry, there are generally two categories of boats – Coast Guard inspected and "six-packs" (uninspected, but operated by Coast Guard licensed captains). We have had numerous teleconferences with owners and operators of for-hire vessels. Their number one priority is the safety of their customers and crew. They are ready to implement protective measures, and willing to make considerable concessions to ensure this safety. We offer, in our proposal, criteria and practices that when

[1] "Headboats" serve individuals and small groups for fishing or cruising. Charter boats serve groups who have exclusive use of the subject vessel.

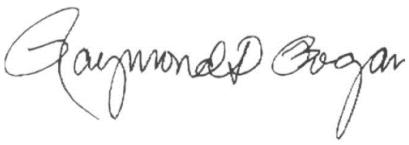
implemented would greatly reduce the risk of infection and be consistent with state and federal measures currently in place and applied to other industries. On behalf of the recreational fishermen and businesses in the state of New Jersey, we ask that you allow the opening of this industry subject to each member complying with these rules.

New Jersey's recreational fishing industry is a crucial component of New Jersey's economy. It supports over 8,500 jobs and generates over $1.4 billion in annual sales as a whole. In addition to providing significant economic output, recreational fishing is also one of the most popular outdoor activities for both resident and neighboring anglers. Recreational fishing provides anglers an opportunity to provide fresh seafood for personal consumption. Importantly, much of the fore-hire industry provides a means by which persons of lesser economic means may gain access to these resources in a way that, now, only those who own a boat can. A limited number of sight-seeing boats also provide this access. The revenue losses incurred during this time have been significant and cannot be made up, thereby putting significant financial strain on businesses. A measured opening could mitigate that strain.

The for-hire businesses that make up the infrastructure for New Jersey's recreational fishing industry are essential and necessary to support recreational saltwater fishing access in the future. In addition to contributing significantly to New Jersey's Shore economy, these operations provide the public the ability to access the state's marine resources. A continued closure jeopardizes the future of that segment of the industry. Much of the economic damage done to these businesses cannot be undone. An opportunity of a structured and tempered opening, however, could help save many of those historic and traditional businesses while providing an otherwise unavailable means of access to marine resources for anglers who do not have other means.

I thank you for your serious consideration of this reopening. I ask that you or any administrator or staff that has any questions to please call me directly and I will address those issues with industry members. I thank you for your efforts.

Very truly yours,



Raymond D. Bogan

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