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## YOUNG FISHERMEN'S BILL INTRODUCED IN U.S. SENATE

*FCC Initiative Gains Momentum as Senators Sullivan (AK), Murkowski (AK), Markey (MA) & Cantwell (WA) Champion Effort to Assist Next Generation of Commercial Fishermen*

Washington, DC – The Fishing Communities Coalition (FCC) today applauded Senators Dan Sullivan (R-AK), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Ed Markey (D-MA) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) for cosponsoring the *Young Fishermen's Development Act* (S.1323). The bipartisan and bicoastal bill, a top FCC priority (watch our [new video](#) released today), would give fishing communities a needed boost by addressing steep and growing obstacles – including high cost of entry and limited entry-level opportunities – facing the next generation of America's commercial fishermen.

"The growing bipartisan momentum behind this bill is very encouraging and shows that leaders in both parties understand that fishermen in today's world need to know a lot more than simply how to fish," said John Pappalardo, CEO of the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance. "We appreciate Senator Markey's leadership in getting this program off the ground because it will give the next generation of fishermen training in fisheries management, business planning and market development tools they'll need to make a good living bringing sustainable seafood to Americans."

The Senate legislation, which aligns closely with a House version introduced in April by U.S. Reps. Don Young (R-AK) and Seth Moulton (D-MA), would launch the first coordinated, nationwide effort to train, educate and assist the next generation of commercial fishermen, providing grants of up to \$200,000 (totaling \$2 million annually) through NOAA's Sea Grant Program. The FCC recently [debuted a short video](#) about the bill that features the voices of current and aspiring fishermen.

FCC member organizations, including Alaska Marine Conservation Council (AMCC) and the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA), represent small-boat commercial fishermen who share a commitment to the sustainable management of Alaska's fisheries. Both organizations consulted on the development of the legislation, leveraging their experiencing building capacity among (and providing training opportunities to) young fishermen.

"From what we have seen in Alaska, we believe that the kind of mentorship and training opportunity that this bill would provide is key to helping new fishing operations get off the

ground and onto the water,” said Linda Behnken, Executive Director of the Alaska Longline Fishermen’s Association.

“As one of those dependent on the long-term success of our working waterfronts, I’m very grateful to Senators Sullivan and Murkowski for supporting legislation that recognizes the challenges today’s fishermen face,” said Hannah Heimbuch, an Alaska commercial fisherman who also works for the Alaska Marine Conservation Council. “By supporting independent fishermen with this action, we have an opportunity to bolster American food security and the health of coastal communities.”

The bill is modeled after the USDA’s successful Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, which is credited with preparing hundreds of young farmers and ranchers for rewarding careers in agriculture. Young fishermen representing FCC members from every U.S. coast recently traveled to Washington, DC, to urge legislators to support the initiative.

“Fishing employs more Alaskans than any other industry in the state, but high barriers and costs remain for newer generations attempting to fill the ranks of this vital sector of our economy,” said Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK). “This legislation will coalesce regional efforts to lower these barriers through new grants, training opportunities and an apprenticeship program that will help harness the experience of seasoned fishermen. Replenishing the stocks of qualified stewards of our fisheries will help ensure Alaska remains the superpower of seafood.”

“For centuries, fishing has been at the heart of coastal communities in Massachusetts, but it is an increasingly challenging one for new fishermen to join,” said Senator Ed Markey (D-MA). “This legislation will help make sure that our fishing industry continues to attract future generations of fishermen. These training programs will help young men and women be able to push off the dock into new careers and make vital economic contributions to their communities.”

#### [About the Young Fishermen’s Development Act](#)

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*[The Fishing Communities Coalition](#) is the united voice for small-boat, community-focused, commercial fishermen from around the country who strive to bring their stewardship vision to bear on national issues. We believe that together, fishermen from around the United States who believe in community-focused ideals, science-based management and forward-looking policies can build a national movement that protects fish, fishermen and fishing communities for this and future generations.*