



April 30, 2020

The Honorable Charles D. Baker  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts State House, 24 Beacon St.  
Office of the Governor, Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker:

Thank you for everything you are doing to lead Massachusetts through the COVID-19 pandemic. We are writing on behalf of Massachusetts' saltwater fishing guides and charter boat captains to request that they be allowed to resume operations at the time of Phase One reopening of the state.

We are supportive of the actions you have taken thus far to reduce the spread of the virus. We recognize that we are living in an unprecedented crisis and that it is your responsibility to take every action that is in the best interest of public health. That being said, the recreational fishing for-hire industry stands to suffer profoundly following your suspension of charter fishing operations on April 27.

In Massachusetts, spring is a critical time for our community. After a winter of investing in boat maintenance and equipment, insurance, and marina fees, these small business owners rely on the spring months to gain back those losses and begin to earn income for the year. With charter fishing now prohibited in Massachusetts, two weeks after the April 15 opening of haddock season and prior to the May 18 black sea bass opening date, revenue from the spring season will be severely compromised. Without the ability to take clients fishing, many guides and charter boat captains may soon face the reality of being forced out of business.

We are hopeful that in the coming weeks the number of new COVID-19 cases will begin to decrease, and that with that decline and other positive indicators you will consider reopening parts of the economy. We are not public health professionals and do not intend to provide input on when such a reopening should occur. However, given the open-air nature of the for-hire industry and the economic devastation the virus has inflicted upon it, it is our sincere hope that the for-hire fleet will be considered among the first businesses able to resume operations.

Should we be allowed to operate, we are confident that our businesses can adhere to the directives from both the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to inhibit further spread of COVID-19.

Examples of preventative actions that our industry members are prepared to take include:

- Requiring completion of a COVID-19 prescreening questionnaire 24 hours prior to charter departure, and maintaining these records for state collection and audit;
- Requesting that all clients who are feeling ill or showing any signs of being infected cancel the trip prior to arrival with no penalty for cancellation;
- Limiting the number of clients on board so as to maintain recommended social distancing guidelines;
- Requiring clients to provide their own food and drink stored in personal containers rather than a communal cooler;
- Wearing approved face coverings and gloves;
- Carrying cleaning and disinfecting materials, soap, water, and hand sanitizer on board;
- Regularly cleaning and disinfecting all areas of the vessel at the beginning and end of each trip; and
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces such as handrails and fishing equipment over the course of each trip.

The saltwater fishing guides and charter boat captains who live in Massachusetts are hard-working American entrepreneurs who, like so many others, have been left with little economic recourse during the pandemic. We implore you to consider their plight and to take action that lets them resume their work as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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Cc:

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