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The Honorable Secretary Ryan Zinke
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

February 27, 2017

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We are writing with respect to the recently released Draft Proposed Program for the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing (“Draft Proposed Program”) by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM).

The Draft Proposed Program includes 98 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), making these areas available for oil and gas leasing during the 2019–2024 period. Since 1982, the North Atlantic OCS area has not been eligible for exploration, leasing, and development of oil and gas resources. We write to convey unequivocally that we do not support the inclusion of the North Atlantic or areas offshore the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

The resources and uses of the OCS are critically important to the health and well-being of Massachusetts. These federal waters off our coast contain rich natural resources and important marine ecosystems that support local, state, regional and national economies and are intrinsic to the social fabric and heritage of our coastal communities. In 2015, the Massachusetts marine economy generated a total statewide economic impact of \$17.336 billion in output, led by our strong tourism and recreation, marine trades, transportation, and fishing and seafood sectors. The commercial and recreational fisheries in federal waters are significantly important resources, and the Port of New Bedford continues to be the number one port in the U.S. for landings value, while Massachusetts ranks third in the nation for fisheries landings values and fifth for volume. The ocean waters of the OCS are a vital habitat for endangered whales, sea turtles, marine birds, and other wildlife that rely on these areas for key portions of their life stages and seasonal

movements. Marine commerce and transportation transit the OCS, moving exports and imports to and from Massachusetts ports, providing important tourism and recreational benefits, and supporting critical national marine security and defense interests. The OCS off Massachusetts also has significant potential for sustainable renewable energy, and we have worked for nearly a decade with BOEM and the Department of Interior on the responsible development of offshore wind that will soon become a key part of our region's energy future. The Commonwealth is currently reviewing bids for wind energy projects in the first phase of developing 1,600 MW of renewable wind energy projects and after the upcoming auction by BOEM this year, there will be more than 900,000 acres of commercial lease area available for potential development.

In June 2017, during the formal Request for Information and Comments process to initiate the development of the Draft Proposed Program, the Baker-Polito administration wrote to you, specifically requesting that the North Atlantic planning area or areas affecting Massachusetts be excluded from the new 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The Draft Proposed Program acknowledged this request but did not specify what action would be taken. The entire Massachusetts Senate and House Delegations have also written to you to express opposition to leasing off our state. This letter should serve to provide you and BOEM with the input required by OCS Lands Act Section 18(a)(2)(F), that the Commonwealth's priority goals and policies are to protect and enhance our commercial and recreational fishing industries, foster critical marine resources and ecosystems, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and advance the effort to responsibly develop offshore wind resources. For more than three decades, the exploration or leasing for oil and gas in the North Atlantic has not been justified, and we believe this holds true today more than ever. We again request formal exclusion from the new 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Proposed Program.

Sincerely,



Charles D. Baker
Governor of Massachusetts




SETH MOULTON
United States Representative



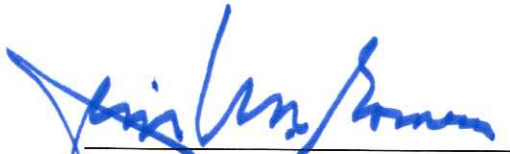
EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senator



ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator



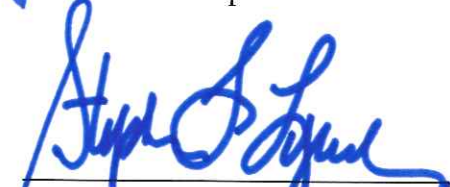
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KATHERINE CLARK
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Cc:
Walter Cruickshank, BOEM Acting Director