

Good morning. Thank you Chairman Bentz for inviting me to testify this morning.

Members of the subcommittee:

My name is Curt Brown, I am a lobsterman from Cape Elizabeth, Maine and marine biologist at Ready Seafood Company in Portland, Maine. If there is one thing we can all agree on today, it is that right whales are majestic animals and they deserve our protection. I would argue that there isn't a group in this country that has done more to protect right whales than Maine's lobster harvesters, despite the fact that most of us, myself included, have never seen a right whale.

I started lobstering when I was eight years old and I've been protecting right whales since I was in high school. In the spring of my senior year in high school, back in 1998, I remember spending my last hundred dollars on whale safe gear so that I could go lobstering that summer. Since then our industry has done everything from

- putting weak links into our endlines, and then new and different weak links into our end lines.
- we have removed all of our floating rope and replaced it with sinking rope.
- we have reduced the number of endlines and in the process removed over 30,000 miles of rope from the Gulf of Maine.
- we mark all of our endlines with specific markings so that in the unlikely event of an entanglement, we know exactly where that entanglement occurred.
- we have closed over 900 square miles of productive fishing grounds at very lucrative times of year.

All of this required a lot of effort on the part of Maine's lobster industry and the take home message of my testimony today, is that this effort has worked. If you remember two numbers from my testimony today, remember the numbers Zero and Zero. There have been zero documented entanglements of a right whale in Maine lobster gear since 2004 and there have been zero documented entanglements of a right whale in Maine lobster gear ever.

Given this, you would expect the representative from Arizona and his donors to be praising Maine's lobster industry for our conservation efforts. Instead, I have to be here today testifying in Washington D.C. and not getting my gear ready for our upcoming lobster season.

This bill would have a devastating impact on Maine's lobster fishery as it would allow the National Marine Fisheries Service to move forward with a rulemaking that could force Maine's iconic industry to shut down. With the six-year regulatory reprieve included in the Omnibus Bill, our industry has time to conduct actual science and monitor where right whales are and aren't and develop innovative gear technology that can be used for the future of our fishery. Representative Grijalva's bill would eliminate the time needed for crucial research into patterns of right whale distribution and abundance but instead force a complete shutdown of Maine's lobster fishery—and the ripple effects across Maine would be widespread. Let me repeat that. Grijalva's bill, which was drafted by radical environmental groups for a

representative from Arizona, would put thousands of hardworking Mainers out of work without meaningfully protecting a single North Atlantic Right Whale.

Make no mistake about it, there is a lot that at stake with this bill.

- The future of my family, who are here with me in D.C. is at stake
- The future of coastal communities from Kittery to Cutler is at stake
- The future of Maine's tax base is at stake
- And the future of our country's most iconic and sustainable fishery is at stake

When you leave here today and talk to your friends and constituents about this issue, please, please remember these two numbers: Zero and Zero. Thank you.