

June 7, 2023

The Honorable Maria Elvira Salazar  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1616 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1419 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Salazar and Kamlager-Dove,

Thank you for your leadership in introducing the Youth Coastal Fishing Program Act of 2023. This bill will provide opportunities for youth to experience their local marine or Great Lakes environment, promoting natural resource stewardship and participation in outdoor recreation. 88% of current fishing participants fished before the age of 12, highlighting the importance of being exposed to fishing at a young age. Not only does spending time outdoors fishing provide health benefits, but research has shown that participants in outdoor recreation place higher importance on environmental values and stand as stronger conservation stewards. This is clearly the case with recreational anglers, who collectively contribute \$1.7 billion annually to conservation through license fees, excise taxes and direct donations.

Access to nature can be a challenge, particularly for Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities; individuals with access and functional needs; and those adversely affected by poverty. Some of these barriers include a lack of connection to nature and feelings of “otherness” in the outdoors. Early introduction to outdoor recreation in a safe, accessible and inclusive space is needed to grow participation and environmental stewardship.

While other federal land management agencies have dedicated programs to connect the public to nature, there is no such recreation program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which manages federal marine fisheries. The Youth Coastal Fishing Program Act fills this gap in NOAA programming, ensuring that youth get the opportunity to connect with their local marine or Great Lakes environment.

We are grateful for your commitment to improving the lives of America’s youth by increasing recreational fishing opportunities through the Youth Coastal Fishing Program Act. We are ready to assist you as you work toward the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association  
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers  
BoatU.S.  
Bonefish & Tarpon Trust  
Center for Sportfishing Policy  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Chesapeake Conservancy

Coastal Conservation Association  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
Ebony Anglers  
Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation  
Hunters of Color  
International Game Fish Association  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas  
National Fishing in Schools Program  
National Marine Manufacturers Association  
Outdoor Afro  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Wild Oceans  
Youth Environmental Alliance