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October 16, 2023

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor
Office of the Texas Governor
State of Texas
P.O. Box 1248
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Governor Abbott:

I write with grave concern regarding the state's inaction to preserve our shrimping industry. Despite federal antidumping regulations, imports remain high and continue to undermine our domestic producers. Our shrimpers continue to face unprecedented challenges and economic losses and urgently need disaster relief assistance to stay afloat. That is why I urge you to send a letter to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo and request a fishery disaster determination for fisheries along the Gulf of Mexico so that Texas shrimpers may access disaster relief assistance.

The shrimping industry is one of the most important commercial fishing industries in Texas, generating \$850 million annually for the state and accounting for over 14,000 domestic jobs. Since the 1950s, the Lone Star State has consistently ranked among the top three shrimp producers in grocery stores and restaurants nationwide. However, that is quickly changing. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in the first five months of this year, Texas shrimpers harvested 6.8 million pounds of shrimp, compared to the 800 million pounds of shrimp that were imported into the U.S. by foreign competitors during the first half of 2023. The increase in foreign shrimp imports into the United States, which usually do not meet our domestic health standards, has led to stiff competition for our shrimpers. Imported shrimp tends to sell under a dollar a pound, forcing domestic shrimpers to decrease their prices to compete.

Counties all over the Gulf, including Cameron County and the City of Port Isabel, have issued disaster declarations. Record low shrimp prices coupled with historically high fuel prices and inflation leave shrimpers unable to cover the costs of fishing, which averages tens of thousands for a trawler to go out to sea. Additionally, labor shortages coupled with immigration regulations have contributed to even more hardship. Local shrimp boat owners are struggling to find American workers willing to go out to sea for days to weeks at a time, which is why shrimpers often rely on experienced workers from Mexico and Central America to complete their crews. However, temporary non-agricultural work visas, H-2B, are not being issued to Mexican or Nicaraguan citizens right now. Instead, these visas are currently reserved for other nationals who often do not have experience working with seafood and cause thousands of dollars in lost revenue per day if

the vessel must return a worker to dock. As a result, many South Texas shrimpers have been forced to remain docked or sell their trawlers as they are unable to compete with foreign shrimp imports. That is why I recently sent a letter to Secretary Raimondo urging the U.S. Department of Commerce to initiate a review and issue a fishery resource disaster determination. I strongly encourage you to follow suit and request a federal fisheries disaster determination as well. I have met with shrimpers all over the 34th Congressional District of Texas and heard their desperate pleas for relief. Shrimpers and family-owned fishing businesses along Texas' Gulf Coast cannot wait any longer. Texan family-owned businesses, coastal communities in my district, and the longevity of Texas' shrimping industry depend on it.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vicente Gonzalez', written in a cursive style.

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress