Dear Senators Schumer, McConnell, Cantwell, and Wicker:

We, the undersigned, write to urge the inclusion of the BLUE GLOBE Act in the final text of the United States Innovation and Competitiveness Act of 2021 (S. 1260) / America COMPETES Act of 2022 (H.R. 4521). This bipartisan legislation is already incorporated into the America COMPETES Act as passed by the House, and the Senate version of the standalone bill was reported favorably by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation in May of 2021.

Every great global superpower in history has been advanced in their naval capabilities and marine technologies. The current reality is that we know very little about our coastal and deep ocean territories. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), less than twenty percent of the global ocean is currently mapped and there remains a vast maritime world of information out there that we don’t know. More than that, the US is lagging behind other countries, including China, in their level of investment in marine research, technology and R&D workforce.

The absence of critical data around our marine environments makes it difficult for Congress and federal agencies to make sound policy decisions. The BLUE GLOBE Act is a critical step in correcting this data shortage, by advancing ocean technologies and scientific research to increase our collective understanding and enact more strategic decisions, ensuring the health of our oceans and support for the Blue Economy.

Sustaining healthy oceans is critical to protecting our food, economic, and national securities. Seafood is the largest traded food commodity in the world, with billions of people relying on seafood as their primary source of protein. As such, domestic commercial and recreational fisheries have a tremendous economic impact on our communities, providing millions of jobs and creating billions of dollars in revenue. More data and mapping will provide critical information necessary for fishermen.

The ocean economy is an important component of the US’s growing economy. According to a 2020 report released by NOAA on the US Ocean and Great Lakes Economy, “GDP from the ocean economy grew 5.7 percent between 2014 and 2015, more than twice as fast as the U.S. economy as a whole, which grew by 2.7 percent.” Further, according to the Ocean Foundation, the value of the oceans economy sectors, which include fisheries and coastal tourism, among other sectors, is estimated to be around $3 trillion dollars every year. There are tremendous opportunities here for US investment and competition.
Federal investment in the blue technology sector is key to expanding innovation and research, sustainable economic growth and to fill the large gaps in private and public financing currently available to blue technology innovators. Opportunities for economic expansion exist with increased investment including aquaculture and fisheries, marine biotechnology, maritime robotics, maritime transportation, offshore renewable energy and ocean-based climate change solutions such as coastal habitat restoration and water and wastewater management.

Over the last few years, the United States Coast Guard has recognized illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing as the leading global maritime security threat. Around the world, IUU fishing depletes marine resources, damages ecosystems and healthy fisheries, and often relies on illicit human trafficking and forced labor. The BLUE GLOBE Act includes language that would tackle IUU fishing by amending the Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement Act to add innovative technologies like improved satellite imagery, advanced electronic monitoring equipment, and vessel location data.

US leadership has an opportunity to support the growth of the blue economy, improve understanding and management of marine resources while ensuring we stay a global competitive leader in the blue technology sector and R&D workforce. We respectfully urge you to ensure this strong piece of bipartisan legislation is included in the final language of the United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021 (S. 1260) / America COMPETES Act of 2022 (H.R. 4521).

The more we know, the better equipped we are to protect our communities, coasts, and country.

Sincerely,

CC: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House and the Honorable Kevin McCarthy, House Republican Leader