To provide that no Federal funds shall be appropriated, awarded, or granted to the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. GOLDEN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on

A BILL

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SEC. 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Red Listing Monterey Bay Aquarium Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds as follows:
(1) Lobstering has served as an economic engine and family tradition in Maine and the other New England States for centuries.

(2) The lobster fishery supports thousands of families who make their livelihoods from catching, processing, or serving lobsters, employing people of all ages year-round, with many harvesters beginning as children and staying in the industry for their entire working lives.

(3) Maine’s lobster fishery alone has an estimated ex-vessel value of $725,000,000, generating more than $1,000,000,000 in economic activity and supporting more than 15,500 jobs throughout the supply chain.

(4) The Maine lobster industry has spearheaded sustainability measures for more than 150 years, ensuring the health of the lobster stock and the marine environment through the following:

   (A) In 1872, Maine passed the first law banning taking of egg-bearing female lobster.

   (B) In 1874, Maine passed the first laws regulating the minimum size of lobster that could be harvested.
(C) In 1948, Maine passed a requirement that fishermen mark female, egg-bearing lobsters with a V-shaped notch.

(D) In 1997, Maine lobstermen removed all surface floating rope and, in 2009, replaced an estimated 27,000 miles of floating line with whale-safe sinking lines.

(E) In 2015, Maine lobstermen adjusted their gear in certain areas to a newly required minimum number of traps per buoy, reducing the amount of vertical rope present in the water by an additional 3,000 miles.

(F) In 2022, lobstermen converted their gear once again, including more “weak links”, more “weak rope” and more traps per buoy to further reduce vertical line in the water column, in addition to removing nearly 1,000 miles of gear from prime fishing grounds.

(5) These measures are the reason why there has never been a serious injury or death of the endangered North Atlantic right whale attributed to the Maine lobster fishery and there has not been a known right whale entanglement with Maine lobster gear since 2004.
(6) According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the majority of known right whale deaths since 2017 have been attributed to vessel strikes in Canada and of the 33 right whale mortalities occurring between 2017 and 2020, 24 of those whales were confirmed to be attributed to entanglements in Canadian fishing gear and vessel strikes in Canadian waters.

(7) Despite these facts, Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch program added the American lobster fishery to a “red list” of seafood that consumers should avoid due to the risk that the fishery poses to right whales.

(8) This red list designation for American lobster by Seafood Watch is speculative and conjecture, not supported by the data or the science as they state in their report, “until there is more specific information available regarding which fisheries are responsible for the unattributed entanglements, Seafood Watch considers that all relevant fisheries that may overlap with North Atlantic right whales pose risks”.

(9) In their own press release announcing the red listing for American lobster, Seafood Watch states, “More than 90% of entanglements cannot be
linked to a specific gear type, and only 12% of entanglements can be linked to a specific location.”

(10) Monterey Bay Aquarium ignores the efforts by the lobster industry to reduce their risk to right whales for the past 150 years, admitting in their report that “effects on mitigation of whale entanglement have yet to be determined”.

(11) This new, unsubstantiated designation has a real world impact; with the lobster industry already facing challenges, the inaccurate designation will hurt the thousands of hardworking lobstermen, their families, and businesses across Maine and has already prompted seafood retailers such as Blue Apron and HelloFresh to pull lobster from their menus.

(12) Monterey Bay’s Seafood Watch Program has produced recommendations that rely on pseudo-scientific claims and false assumptions that ignore scientific principles that should underpin any legitimate ratings and, by ignoring the facts, Seafood Watch is not encouraging safe fishing, but rather damaging the reputation of its certification process by smearing an entire industry and misleading consumers.
Monterey Bay Aquarium receives millions of Federal taxpayer dollars for scientific research and to promote ocean conservation and seafood sustainability, yet the Monterey Bay Aquarium has irresponsibly ignored scientific facts and the lobster fishery's history of sustainability.

SEC. 3. PROHIBITION ON FEDERAL FUNDING FOR THE MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM.

No Federal funds shall be appropriated, awarded, or granted to the Monterey Bay Aquarium.