Dear Mr. President:

In September 2015, we wrote urging you to designate as a national monument an area of the Atlantic Ocean known as the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts. We write to reiterate our call to preserve this undersea landscape and make this precious ecosystem the first marine national monument ever established in the Atlantic Ocean.

About 150 miles off the coast of New England, along the continental shelf, lies an aquatic treasure of unbelievable bounty. Though it is not apparent from the surface, beneath the ocean waves there is an abundance and diversity of sea life rivaled in few other places. The New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts area is home to at least 73 different species of deep sea corals -- some that can live for a thousand years or longer. There are countless sharks, whales, dolphins, sea turtles, sea birds and a tremendous diversity of other animals and organisms; many rare and unusual. They inhabit a world of canyons that rivals the Grand Canyon in size and scale and underwater mountains that are higher than any east of the Rockies. These mountains -- known as seamounts -- rise as high as 7,700 feet from the ocean floor and are the only seamounts in the U.S. Atlantic Ocean.

The Antiquities Act of 1906 affords you the authority to declare national monuments in areas containing "objects of historic or scientific interest," thus to ensure that they receive proper care and management, as well as protection from damaging commercial activity. You have been a champion of using this law to provide permanent protection to irreplaceable environmental and historical places and property. Sixteen presidents have used this authority to create 150 monuments, including the Grand Canyon, the Grand Tetons, and the Statue of Liberty. Many of these were later re-designated as national parks.

The New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts area, a pristine hotspot of diverse and fragile wildlife and habitats, is deeply deserving of this designation, and we urge you to employ your authority under the Antiquities Act to protect this area. We recommend that the new national monument encompass the area outlined in the enclosed map, including eight canyons,
five of which are named (Oceanographer, Gilbert, Lydonia, Nygren and Heezen) and four
seamounts (Bear, Physalia, Retriever and Mytilus). Scientists with New England’s most
respected aquariums have done an in-depth analysis that demonstrates that the area outlined on
the map deserves this kind of protection from the water surface to the sea floor.

This area is just as precious as any national park, and its riches just as priceless. The
reasons to designate it as a monument are clear, including the following:

- **Protect countless species from irreversible damage.** Many of the species in the
  proposed monument are highly sensitive to human activity. A monument designation
  would protect this part of the ocean from human intrusions that disturb marine life. This
  area may be relatively unexploited now, but advances in technology make it increasingly
  likely that commercial efforts could reach these highly vulnerable ecosystems.

- **Help make the ocean more resilient to climate change and ocean acidification.** As
  ocean waters warm and become more acidic due to their absorption of the increased
  carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the biology for many plants and animals is disrupted.
  Limiting human intrusion in areas of the Atlantic Ocean will bolster the strength and
  resilience of species living there, helping them survive impending ocean acidification and
  warming. A healthier and more robust Atlantic ecosystem also helps ensure more
  productive fisheries overall.

- **Support economic activity that depends on healthy oceans.** Tens of thousands of
  people in our state and region are employed in the recreation and tourism sectors,
  including whale watching and seabird viewing. Designation of the monument will
  support these important contributors to our region’s economy. At the same time,
  designation of this monument will curtail few current fishing practices, as relatively little
  seafood is caught in this area.

- **Advance science and research.** Important institutions in our state and region – including
  the University of Connecticut, the Mystic Aquarium, the New England Aquarium, and
  the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk – have identified numerous scientific research and
  educational opportunities within the living marine laboratories of the proposed monument
  area. These institutions will use new materials and knowledge gained from studying the
  monument to educate the students and residents of our state and the region about the
  value of the deep ocean.

- **Preserve natural history.** A monument designation would ensure this natural treasure is
  around for future generations to enjoy, appreciate and study.

You have been a leader in protecting marine environments, including taking a similar
step to expand a marine monument in the Pacific Ocean. The time has come to create a
monument in the Atlantic. We are joined by thousands of Connecticut residents, over 100
regional businesses, nearly 150 marine scientists, dozens of religious leaders, and major
environmental organizations in our request. There is no better time than this year – the 100th
anniversary of our national park system – to establish another “blue park” and cement your legacy as a champion of environmental and historic preservation both on land and at sea.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate

ROSALIND DELAURA
Member of Congress

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

ELIZABETH H. ESTY
Member of Congress

Enclosure
Map of Proposed Monument Designation

Canyons Unit (using North American Datum 1983)

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* between -65.94585459, 39.93958175 and -66.93142365, 38.86613312, the seaward line follows the EEZ, which is a curved arc.