

March 28, 2017

Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, Chair
Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
1020 N Street, Room 160
Sacramento, CA 95814
Re: Assembly Bill 1151 (Gloria): Protect the Vaquita - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Garcia,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to express our strong support for Assembly Bill 1151, by Assemblymember Todd Gloria, the Vaquita-Harmful Fish and Fish Products Act. AB 1151 is an essential element of a larger effort to save the vaquita—the world's smallest and most endangered cetacean species—from extinction.

The vaquita is a porpoise species endemic to the Gulf of California, Mexico. There are only about 30 vaquita remaining in a population that has declined by 95 percent since 1990, when there were more than 700. The vaquita's steep decline is solely attributable to fishermen's use of gillnets in vaquita habitat, a small area in the northwest corner of the upper Gulf. While vaquita are not the target of fishermen using gillnets, they become entangled and drown in them.

Over the last two decades, the Mexican government has announced several programs to help save the vaquita. Unfortunately these programs have been poorly enforced and last year the vaquita's rate of decline increased to nearly 50 percent, despite a partial ban on the use of gillnets in vaquita waters. Even in the past few weeks, Mexican authorities have found dead vaquita with injuries consistent with entanglement and drowning in gillnets. The situation has become so desperate that some organizations have called for a boycott of shrimp from Mexico to pressure the Mexican government to take all measures necessary to save the vaquita.

AB 1151 supports the Mexican and international scientists, communities, and conservationists working to save the vaquita from gillnets. This bill supports Mexican efforts to transition gillnet-using fisheries in the upper Gulf to alternative, vaquita-friendly gear.

There is still time to save the vaquita and this bill is an important part of the larger effort – including both on-the-ground interventions and consumer demand campaigns – that are trying to give the species the best chance of survival. For these reasons, we support AB 1151 and urge you to vote YES on this important bill.

Sincerely,

[Name]
[Title]
[Organization]

cc: Members of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife committee
Assemblymember Todd Gloria