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SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Senator Gary Stevens  
State Capitol, Room 429  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

[Senator.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov)

**RE: Support for SB 95 – Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund**

March 30, 2017

Dear Senator Stevens,

Southeast Conference would like to express complete support for SB 95. Our Board of Directors and members recognize that SB 95 is part of a larger effort to develop mariculture in Alaska.

Using a consensus process our organization developed the Southeast Alaska 2020 Economic Development Plan and in that plan one of the top priorities is to grow a \$1 billion mariculture industry in 30 years. We agree with the Governor and the Mariculture Task Force that a developed mariculture industry will have positive economic, environmental, cultural, and manufacturing value, as well as food security benefits to Alaskans.

We support the Mariculture Task Force in its effort to provide recommendations for a comprehensive plan to develop a viable and sustainable mariculture industry producing shellfish and aquatic plants for the long-term benefit of Alaska's economy, environment, and communities.

Southeast Conference is a non-profit organization with members from large and small cities, villages, tribal organizations and corporations, individuals, as well as some state and federal agencies. Our mission is to undertake and support activities that promote strong economies, healthy communities, and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska.

SB 95 plays an important role in the development of mariculture in Alaska. SB 95 allows for shellfish and seaweed hatcheries to apply for loan funds from the Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund. This will provide an important source of support for these new hatcheries. The Task Force has identified shellfish and seaweed hatcheries as a critical piece of infrastructure that is necessary for the development of mariculture in Alaska. However, the financial support of these operations is difficult during the developmental stage when the industry is too small to financially support these operations entirely through seed sales. This type of support will help unlock the chicken-or-egg dilemma of the industry and provide the support to help grow past this stage.

The Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund is an existing \$5 million asset of the State of Alaska that was created to help develop the mariculture industry by providing loans to aquatic farmers. However, if farmers do not have a consistent source of seed to purchase, it is difficult for them to

grow and expand their businesses even though they have access to this loan fund. SB 95 will amend the Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund to more effectively and fully deploy this asset to develop the mariculture industry.

Thank you for sponsoring this important legislation. Southeast Conference supports SB 95 and appreciates your proactive role in introducing the legislation. If there are any questions, you may contact our office.

On Behalf of our Board of Directors and Members

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shelly Wright".

Shelly Wright  
Executive Director

Cc:

Senator Mia Costello, Chair, Senate Labor and Committee: [Senator.Mia.Costello@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Mia.Costello@akleg.gov)

Tim Lamkin, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens: [Tim.Lamkin@akleg.gov](mailto:Tim.Lamkin@akleg.gov)