



HB 356 Sponsor Statement ver I, 3.26.26

***Hb356* "An Act relating to health and sanitary requirements and certain permits for commercial fishing vessels; and providing for an effective date."**

Alaska's commercial fishing industry is the backbone of our coastal economies, providing thousands of jobs, sustaining families, and contributing billions to our state's revenue through seafood harvests and exports. However, current state health and sanitary regulations, along with associated permitting processes, often impose outdated, overly burdensome requirements on smaller-scale commercial fishing operations—particularly those using vessels for limited, near-shore, or "micro-fisheries" activities such as direct-market sales of fresh catch.

House Bill 356, the Alaska Coastal Micro-Fisheries Act, seeks to modernize and streamline these regulations without compromising food safety or public health. The bill addresses key challenges faced by small boat fishermen and vessel operators by:

Clarifying and reducing unnecessary health and sanitary mandates for certain classes of commercial fishing vessels, especially those engaged in low-volume, high-value direct-to-consumer or local market sales.

Allowing flexibility in permitting requirements to better fit the scale and operational realities of micro-fisheries, while still ensuring compliance with federal standards (e.g., FDA and USCG guidelines) where applicable.

Providing an effective framework that supports economic diversification in rural and coastal communities by making it easier for independent harvesters to process and sell their catch locally. This legislation builds on Alaska's commitment to sustainable fisheries management and recognizes that one-size-fits-all rules can stifle innovation and small business growth in our maritime sector. By easing regulatory hurdles for compliant, smaller operations, HB 356 will help preserve and grow family-based fishing enterprises, boost local food security, and strengthen coastal economies—particularly in regions where commercial fishing is a primary livelihood.

I urge my colleagues to support House Bill 356 to promote a more agile, fair, and prosperous future for Alaska's commercial fishermen and the communities that depend on them.