



ALASKA FARM BUREAU, INC.

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Senator Anna MacKinnon, Co-Chair
Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
Senate Finance Committee

Dear Co-Chairs MacKinnon and Hoffman:

Alaskans spend over \$2 billion on food annually, and approximately 95% of that food is shipped in. Improving opportunities for Alaska's farmers and ranchers through better agriculture policy will assist in building this industry. Having successful farms will improve Alaska's food security and diversifying our economy.

The CS for HB 217 has a few points that will assist farmers and ranchers in their business:

- Institutional purchasing is an underutilized market for Alaska's farmers that would keep dollars in the state to be recirculated in the economy. There are multiple pieces to this program that need improvement; HB 217 addresses the preference amount. Increasing the option to give up to 15% preference could make this more attainable to farmers as they expand their production and we work on the other pieces of the procurement puzzle. Increasing the allowable preference does not increase the overall budget for these grocery contracts.
- Participants of the Alaska Grown program are proud to display that their products are Alaska Grown. Being able to use marketing tools like stickers, twist ties, etc. when selling their products is a great tool that tells consumers they are getting a quality product. Giving receipt authority to Division of Ag will enable them to continue purchasing these in bulk and providing them to Alaska Grown participants.
- Agritourism is an increasingly popular way to expand farming businesses, it's also a way to educate consumers about farming and where their food comes from. There are inherent risks being on a farm, this does put our farmers in a precarious position when they invite people onto their farms. Adding agritourism ("farm touring") to the civil liabilities statute will add some protections for farmers who opt for incorporating agritourism to their business/educational plan.

All of these aspects in CSHB 217 could help farmers grow their businesses through marketing assistance, access to markets and improving protections. The Alaska Farm Bureau asks for support in passing HB 217 this session.

Respectfully,



Amy Seitz, Executive Director
Alaska Farm Bureau, Inc.