



## **Sponsor Statement**

### **House Concurrent Resolution 18 COMMERCIAL FISHERIES PROGRAMS**

#### **SPONSOR'S INTENT**

HCR 18 calls on the Legislature to strengthen and support programs and resources in the state that assist the efforts of younger resident Alaskans to launch ownership-level careers in commercial fisheries.

The seafood industry is Alaska's largest private-sector employer and has been the economic mainstay in dozens of our communities for more than a century. Yet only a fraction of seafood harvesting businesses are Alaska owned. Nearly half of the Individual Fishing Quota shares issued for Alaska fisheries are held by non-Alaskans, and nearly one quarter of the limited entry permits issued for Alaskan fisheries are Outside owned. The financial and societal contributions resident fishers make to their home ports and hometowns are considerable; Alaska should do all it can to increase resident ownership of businesses harvesting fish in its waters.

In recent decades, the mean age of commercial fishing entry permit owners in Alaska has increased from just more than 40 years to nearly 50 years. This "graying of the fleet" is happening in part because younger Alaskans confront ever more daunting obstacles to acquiring fish harvesting operations.

Nowadays, the cost of entry into commercial fisheries on a diversified level sufficient to provide a satisfactory income for a skipper and crew is often more than \$350,000. Such amounts are beyond the reach of most young Alaskans, who frequently lack the considerable credit histories necessary to secure large bank loans. Moreover, with the increase in limited-entry and rationalized fisheries in recent decades, running a successful fishing operation requires sharp business skills and the savvy to navigate complex state and federal regulatory systems.

HCR 18 recognizes there are many fine programs and agencies in the state whose goals include promoting strong resident commercial fisheries and aiding younger Alaskans' success in them. The resolution urges the Legislature to examine these efforts in order to determine how best they can be strengthened and focused to further the aspirations of young Alaskan fisheries entrepreneurs. Doing so will fortify one of the state's most important industries and the many communities—rural and urban alike—that benefit from it.

*Prepared by the House Special Committee on Fisheries.*