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SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

March 1, 2017

Representative Dan Ortiz
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801
Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov

Re: Support for HB 76 – Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund

Dear Representative Ortiz:

On behalf of the Southeast Conference, I would like to express support for HB 76 which alters the Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund (Fund) in order to more effectively and fully deploy this state asset to develop the mariculture industry by addressing bottlenecks in seed supply.

Southeast Conference is a state and federally designated regional economic development organization for Southeast Alaska. For nearly 60 years, Southeast Conference has served as the collective voice for advancing the region's economy. Southeast Conference has 180 member organizations representing people from 32 regional communities. The mission of Southeast Conference is to undertake and support activities that promote strong economies, healthy communities and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska.

In 2016, the Southeast Conference adopted Resolution No. 17-03. With that Resolution, the assembly urged the State of Alaska to amend the statutory requirements for the mariculture revolving loan fund. I have attached that Resolution to this letter for you.

Shellfish and seaweed hatcheries are critical pieces of infrastructure 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. Providing access to the Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund will help to break the chicken-or-egg stage of the industry and provide the support necessary to help the industry grow past this stage.

Seed security has been identified as a top priority by aquatic farmers in Alaska for over 10 years. If farmers do not have a consistent source of seed to purchase, it is difficult and often impossible for them to grow and expand their businesses. Altering the fund to provide access to 40% of the fund to hatcheries will help provide better seed security for farmers.

Another benefit of developing mariculture in Alaska is the important role that shellfish and seaweed hatcheries can play in adapting to ocean changes and acidification, and the Eco services that shellfish and seaweed provide to our marine environments.

Thank you for sponsoring this important legislation. Southeast Conference supports HB 76 and appreciates your work to bring economic opportunities to Alaska.

Sincerely,

Shelly Wright, Executive Director
Southeast Conference

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

Attachments: Resolution No. 17-03

cc: Rep. Louise Stutes, Chair, House Fisheries Committee: Rep.Louise.Stutes@akleg.gov
Reid Harris, Staff, House Fisheries Committee: Reid.Harris@akleg.gov
Elizabeth Bolling, Staff, Rep. Ortiz: Elizabeth.Bolling@akleg.gov