

UNITED SOUTHEAST ALASKA GILLNETTERS

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March 15, 2017

Senator Gary Stevens
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK 99811
Via email: Senator.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov

Re: **SUPPORT for SB 71** - *"An Act relating to limitations on certain commercial fishing loans made by the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development."*

Dear Senator Stevens and Committee Members:

United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters (USAG) supports SB 71, which would increase the amount of funds eligible loan recipients are able to borrow to \$400,000 (from \$300,000) under DCCED's Commercial Fishing Loan Programs. The increase keeps this important program relevant in today's economy as associated costs continue to rise since the current loan limit was established in 1982.

Many USAG members have used, or currently use, the Department's commercial fishing loan programs to start and/or enhance their fishing careers. In addition to addressing rising startup costs, increasing the loan limit might encourage fishermen to participate in other useful loan programs such as product quality or fuel efficiency, which would in turn benefit the industry with higher quality seafood and more efficient operations, respectively.

Thank you for your work and for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me with questions.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Wallesz
Executive Director

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The mission of United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters is to protect, serve and enhance the gillnet fleet of southeast Alaska. We represent the interests of 473 salmon gillnet permit holders and their families.