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Dear Members of the House Fisheries Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA) to express my support for House Bill 199. HB 199 proposes important changes to Alaska's fish habitat permitting law and will help ensure that the salmon stocks upon which many of our small boat fishermen and coastal economies depend are protected throughout their life.

In Alaska, most commercial fishing permit holders are small and family-owned businesses that support dozens of other service businesses. The salmon industry alone creates tens of thousands of jobs for Alaskans each year and generates hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity.

Because our members value the sustainability of our fisheries for both ourselves and the next generation, we work hard as fishermen (in conjunction with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game) to manage the extraction of fish. This involves reporting our catch, participating in the management process, and carefully following bycatch, catch, size and other limits and regulations while fishing. This level of care and protection should be taken at every step of the salmon life cycle to ensure Alaska's salmon runs remain productive for decades to come.

ALFA is concerned that the law as written does not provide the agency with scientific clarity or certainty to stand up to development efforts that put Alaska's fish habitats at risk. HB 199 not only sets clear standards for ADF&G to protect Alaska's fisheries, but will give Alaskans a chance to weigh in on decisions impacting our salmon rivers. HB 199 expands ADF&G's authority to protect fish habitat, creates enforceable protection standards, and gives Alaskans a voice in the permitting process.

HB 199 will set clear standards to protect Alaska's wild salmon for generations to come, and will provide ongoing benefits to Alaska's fisheries, coastal communities, and the state's economy. With respect, we ask that you support HB 199.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Linda Behnken".

Linda Behnken (Director, ALFA)