

Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for CSHB217 – Alaska Food Freedom Act



Dear Legislators:

I am writing in support of CSHB217, the "Alaska Food Freedom Act." As an advocate of locally grown and produced food, I serve in a several roles in Alaska's food system – namely as a director for farmers markets, both online and physical. Over the past 8 years, the number of markets in the state have grown dramatically, helping to bolster local economies by creating jobs and generating wealth that remains in communities. With ~\$1.5 billion being sent outside to feed Alaskans, or 95% of our food purchased outside of Alaska, we should be doing everything we can to support a more secure food system.

This bill will further expand opportunities for small scale producers by including online farmers markets in cottage food sales exemptions, as well as expand community access to fresh, local foods. It would give small scale producers a starting place to launch their business and test the market. Cottage food sales regulations have been expanded in several other states, namely Wyoming, to virtually no public health threats. Nothing in the Alaska Food Freedom Act precludes the state DEC from investigating any outbreaks of food borne illness.

Other components of this bill serve to strengthen our local food system as well. I can directly attest to the value of the Alaska Grown program and logo. The AK Grown program has greatly increased the visibility of local foods across all markets – farmers markets to conventional grocery stores. It has created a sense of pride amongst consumers and is a visible badge of quality. In recent years the Division of Agriculture could not keep up with the demand for AK Grown promotional material. By allowing a fee to be charged and collected, we can more easily support this invaluable program. In addition, by increasing the State of Alaska's procurement differential for Alaska Grown products, the State would exemplify their commitment to local food and local food producers, by giving them more opportunity to sell their products and grow a sustainable, renewable business.

Thank you for your time- I strongly encourage you to support CSHB217, aimed at creating opportunities for small scale producers, strengthening Alaska's fragile local foods system, and to grow Alaska's local economies.

Sincerely,

Robbi Mixon 2/8/18

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