March 6, 2020

The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz
Chair, House Labor and Commerce
Alaska State Capitol Room 421
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: HB 235 – AK Workforce Investment Board

Dear Chairwoman Spohnholz and members of the House Labor and Commerce Committee:

While we cannot speak for the Administration, the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) recognizes the need for in-state seafood workforce training to be able to sustain the valuable seafood industry in Alaska. We appreciate and support efforts to reauthorize the state's Technical Vocation Education Program (TVEP).

ASMI is a public-private partnership between the State of Alaska and the Alaska seafood industry established to foster the economic development of the most valuable renewable and natural resource in Alaska. Nearly all of Alaska's seafood products go through the hands of seafood processors, who add value by turning raw fish and shellfish into myriad products for markets around the world. More than 40 different occupations and 26,000 employees are supported by the processing sector, including machinists, engineers, electricians, cooks, and laborers, among many others. Seafood is the largest manufacturing sector in Alaska, accounting for 70 percent of the state's manufacturing employment in 2018.

The Alaska seafood processing sector relies on a diverse workforce with unique skill sets. Quite often, the industry depends on out-of-state training options, imports costly skilled workers, or is not able to evolve and incorporate new innovations and processing techniques due to the lack of a skilled workforce. A major concern is the recruitment of the next generation of the seafood workforce in Alaska.

Once again, thank you for your efforts to reauthorize the TVEP funds so that dedicated funding can support workforce training for the seafood processing sector which will, in turn, help grow the value of Alaska's seafood resource.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Woodrow
Executive Director
Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute