



February 24, 2020

Email: Representative.Louise.Stutes@akleg.gov

Dear Representative Stutes,

The Pacific Seafood Processors Association (PSPA) supports your effort to reauthorize the state's Technical Vocational Education Program (TVEP) and to amend the program to ensure that dedicated funding goes to workforce training for the seafood industry commensurate with the annual contribution by the seafood workforce to the unemployment insurance fund. Thank you for your interest in this program and improving local training for the Alaska seafood industry.

PSPA is comprised of eight seafood processing companies that purchase fish from harvesters and provide markets from Ketchikan to Unalaska. These companies operate 25 facilities in 15 coastal communities across Alaska and three floating processors to serve remote locations. Annually, the seafood processing sector employs about 26,000 workers in Alaska, from processing line workers to highly skilled positions such as engineers and technicians. Our companies are regularly in need of skilled workers to run and repair complex machinery, to manage the logistics of processing plants, and to respond to changing markets and growing regulatory requirements.

PSPA has been an ongoing supporter of the Alaska Maritime Workforce Development Plan, and continues to invest in its implementation through the efforts of Maritime Works and the Alaska Department of Labor. The goals of the plan include developing a responsive workforce that enables the maritime sector to remain a substantial contributor to the state, and increasing the number of Alaskans working in skilled maritime occupations. The seafood processing sector, along with the harvest sector, comprises Alaska's largest direct private employer with nearly 59,000 direct jobs, and is a significant economic driver in the state. Support for the seafood processing sector must include local training opportunities that are attuned to the needs of the seafood industry and career exposure for the next generation in seafood processing.

The state's TVEP fund sees a substantial contribution each year from seafood workers via their required unemployment insurance contributions - approximately \$600,000 annually. Yet TVEP funds spent on in-state training for the seafood processing workforce remains about 10% of the annual contribution (\$60k). This level of funding is insufficient to ensure a sufficient and trained workforce, which ultimately impacts the long-term viability of the processing sector, the economy of fishery-dependent coastal communities, and the state overall. As such, we support any efforts to ensure that seafood worker contributions be dedicated to seafood workforce training. Thank you for your work to amend the Representative Louise Stutes

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reauthorization of TVEP this session to accommodate this need and to dedicate the funding contributed by our workforce to support training for our workforce.

Please let me know if I can provide additional information or assist in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Barrows", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chris Barrows
President, PSPA
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