



SITKA LOCAL FOODS NETWORK

408-D Marine Street

Sitka, Alaska 99835

sitkalocalfoodsnetwork@gmail.com

<http://www.sitkalocalfoodsnetwork.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/SitkaLocalFoodsNetwork>

To whom it may concern:

Feb. 22, 2022

I am writing on behalf of the Sitka Local Foods Network to show our support for House Bill 298, which creates a food strategy task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

The Sitka Local Foods Network is a 501(c)(3) food security nonprofit whose mission is to increase the amount of locally produced and harvested foods in the diets of Southeast Alaskans. Food security is a big issue in Sitka, and Alaska. We currently import about 90-95 percent of our food from the Lower 48 or foreign countries, even with local fishing, hunting, gardening, and foraging. As the pandemic has shown, if our supply chains break down we go hungry. Not only do we need more food production in Alaska, we also need more food storage facilities so we can have emergency supplies. In 2014, we helped produce the Sitka Community Food Assessment Indicators Report (go to <https://sitkalocalfoodsnetwork.org/documents/>, for this document and other food security documents), which showed a lot of inequities in Sitka, with about one out of every six people being on some sort of food assistance.

HB298 comes at a time when Gov. Dunleavy also recently announced the creation of a food security task force. However, in comparing the makeup of the two task forces, we find the HB298 task force will be more inclusive than the one recently announced by Gov. Dunleavy. The task force in HB298 includes Alaska Native tribes, youth, people who work with low-income residents, and others who aren't listed in the governor's task force. We need more diversity in which voices are heard on this issue. If we have to choose one task force, we pick the one from HB298 because it is designed to tackle issues not even covered in Gov. Dunleavy's announcement. Also, the task force from HB298 will be around at least until 2025, and there was no time frame mentioned in Gov. Dunleavy's announcement.

We appreciate the Legislature taking the time to work on this critical issue for Alaska, and enthusiastically support HB298.

Sincerely,

Charles Bingham

Sitka Local Foods Network board president



Alaska Food Policy Council

3734 Ben Walters Ln.

Homer, AK 99603

907-235-4068 ext. 23

info@alaskafoodpolicycouncil.org

www.akfoodpolicycouncil.org

Executive Director

Robbi Mixon, *Homer*

AFPC Governing Board

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Anchorage

Heidi Rader,
Fairbanks

Sara Renard,
Anchorage

Marissa Wilson,
Homer

Evie Witten,
Anchorage

February 21, 2022

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

I'm writing today on behalf of the Alaska Food Policy Council to show our enthusiastic support of HB 298, creating a food strategy task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

The Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC) is a nonprofit organization committed to making improvements to Alaska's food system. Over 175 agencies and individuals representing federal and state agencies, tribal entities, schools, university programs, farmers, fisheries, and food systems businesses are members of the AFPC. Our organizational mission, to create a healthier, more secure, and more self-reliant Alaska by improving our food system is directly aligned with HB 298's intent.

The past two years have revealed more clearly than ever a tremendous lack of security within our Alaskan food system - shipping delays, food waste, increased hunger, and not enough local production to feed our citizens, to name a few of the symptoms.

We have great challenges ahead of us, but have hope that this proposed task force can help lay the groundwork to transform our food system into a more localized, inclusive, equitable, and environmentally sustainable one. Through the collaboration from stakeholders across Alaska's food system, recommendations on policy, programs, and investments can help achieve this.

The formation of a diverse and far-reaching food security task force would offer Alaska a chance to move toward greater food security for all Alaskans. We are in full support of HB 298.

Kindly,

Robbi Mixon, Executive Director
Alaska Food Policy Council



February 17, 2022

Dear Members of the Legislature:

On behalf of the Alaska Food Coalition, I would like to express support for HB 298, creating a food security task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

The Alaska Food Coalition consists of more than 160 partners from every corner of Alaska representing food banks and pantries, state agencies, tribal councils, faith-based organizations, nonprofits, among others. We advocate for state and federal policies to reduce food insecurity, build healthy communities, and promote access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food through the cultivation of a strong anti-hunger network. HB 298 will reinforce our efforts to ensure all Alaskans have enough nutritious food for a healthy life, allowing our communities to thrive.

Alaskans face unique challenges to food production and maintaining access to nutritious foods due to our geographic isolation and the distance between our communities. Finding solutions to overcome these barriers will require research and collaboration among the different food sectors of our state. The task force created by HB 298 will allow for this necessary broad representation among stakeholders of the Alaska food system while also giving communities across Alaska a voice at the table.

Focusing policy and implementation recommendations on sustainably growing the agricultural industry, improving efficiencies and outcomes in state-run programs, and ensuring food security in rural and urban communities will substantially benefit all Alaskans. This legislation supports this while also strengthening markets for locally grown, harvested, and processed foods.

The formation of a robust food security task force stands to greatly enhance Alaska's food systems, and we are enthusiastic about the research and projects that HB 298 will provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald P. Meehan".

Ron Meehan
Alaska Food Coalition Manager
rmeehan@foodbankofalaska.org
907-222-3103



Alaska Food Policy Council

3734 Ben Walters Ln.

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Executive Director

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Rachael Miller,
Anchorage

Heidi Rader,
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Sara Renard,
Anchorage

Marissa Wilson,
Homer

Evie Witten,
Anchorage

February 21, 2022

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

I'm writing today on behalf of the Alaska Food Policy Council to show our enthusiastic support of HB 298, creating a food strategy task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

The Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC) is a nonprofit organization committed to making improvements to Alaska's food system. Over 175 agencies and individuals representing federal and state agencies, tribal entities, schools, university programs, farmers, fisheries, and food systems businesses are members of the AFPC. Our organizational mission, to create a healthier, more secure, and more self-reliant Alaska by improving our food system is directly aligned with HB 298's intent.

The past two years have revealed more clearly than ever a tremendous lack of security within our Alaskan food system - shipping delays, food waste, increased hunger, and not enough local production to feed our citizens, to name a few of the symptoms.

We have great challenges ahead of us, but have hope that this proposed task force can help lay the groundwork to transform our food system into a more localized, inclusive, equitable, and environmentally sustainable one. Through the collaboration from stakeholders across Alaska's food system, recommendations on policy, programs, and investments can help achieve this.

The formation of a diverse and far-reaching food security task force would offer Alaska a chance to move toward greater food security for all Alaskans. We are in full support of HB 298.

Kindly,

Robbi Mixon, Executive Director
Alaska Food Policy Council



February 27, 2022

To Honorable Members of the Legislature,

We are writing today on behalf of the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA) and the Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust (ASFT) to express our enthusiastic support of HB 298, creating a food strategy task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown and harvested.

The past two years have revealed more clearly than ever a tremendous lack of security within our Alaskan food system - shipping delays, food waste, increased hunger, and not enough local production to feed our citizens, to name a few of the symptoms.

In response to increased food insecurity and workforce development issues throughout the state of Alaska, in March 2020, ALFA and ASFT launched a collaborative Seafood Donation Program that deployed \$2.5 million to purchase and deliver more than 640,000 donated seafood meals to individuals and families in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest facing food insecurity. Doing so not only addressed immediate food security demand, but also provided market stability for local fishermen whose markets were completely disrupted by COVID-19.

COVID-19 brought to light many complex and long-standing issues, including the need to increase Alaska's regional food security overall and U.S. consumption of U.S. seafood in particular. While ALFA and ASFT were able to leverage our existing network and infrastructure to deliver seafood to families in need, we continue to receive requests for seafood and the demand for nutritious, culturally valued food continues to grow.

While we are aware of the challenges ahead, we recognize Alaska's tremendous potential to build food security from the rich natural resources of our lands and waters. The proposed task force will help lay the groundwork to transform our food system to be more localized, inclusive, equitable, and environmentally sustainable. I think it's OK tight but The formation of a diverse and far-reaching food security task force will offer Alaska a chance to move toward greater food security for all who inhabit this great State. We are in full support of HB 298.

Sincerely,

Natalie Sattler, Program Director ASFT
Linda Behnken, Executive Director ALFA



February 25, 2022

RE: HB 298 (Food Strategy Task Force) – Support

Dear Members of the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee,

The American Heart Association (AHA) is writing in support of HB 298. This bill creates the Alaska Food Strategy Task Force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

The AHA advocates for state and federal policies to reduce food insecurity, build healthy communities, and promote access to affordable and nutritious food. HB 298 is consistent with our efforts to ensure all Alaskans have enough nutritious food for a healthy life, allowing our communities to thrive.

Alaskans face unique challenges to food production and maintaining access to nutritious foods due to geographic isolation and the distance between communities. Finding solutions to overcome these barriers will require research and collaboration among the different food sectors of our state. The Task Force created by HB 298 will allow for this necessary broad representation among stakeholders of the Alaska food system while also giving communities across Alaska a voice at the table.

Focusing policy and implementation recommendations on sustainably growing the agricultural industry, improving efficiencies and outcomes in state-run programs, and ensuring food security in rural and urban communities will substantially benefit all Alaskans. This legislation supports this while also strengthening markets for locally grown, harvested, and processed foods.

The formation of a robust Food Strategy Task Force stands to greatly enhance Alaska's food systems and reduce food insecurity. It is for the above-mentioned reasons we urge your support of HB 298.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Morgan".

Jamie Morgan
Government Relations Regional Lead
American Heart Association

Cc: Representative Snyder

February 22, 2022

Rep. Liz Snyder
State Capitol Room 421
Juneau AK, 99801



Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage
Emily Becker, President
P.O. Box 221403
Anchorage, AK 99522

Re: Letter of Support for HB 298, Alaska Food Strategy Task Force

Dear Rep. Snyder:

The Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage (AMGA) supports your efforts to establish a Food Strategy Task Force via the Alaska Legislature. We hope this will strengthen and complement the Governor's Alaska Food Security and Independence task force.

AMGA was organized to enhance and supplement the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska Cooperative Extension Master Gardener program. Our mission is to promote the availability of gardening information as a result of University study and experimentation. Our 250 members actively foster, promote and disseminate gardening information in Alaska. We have a wide variety of interests, from gardening in schools, fruit growing, flower design, and backyard agriculture.

We believe fostering gardening projects around the state would greatly benefit our food security. Alaska has great need and great potential for more agriculture projects, as food security remains a serious issue in our Anchorage community and across the state. We welcome more partners to the table and look forward to your work on policy solutions.

Sincerely,

Emily Becker
President



February 22, 2022

Dear Members of the Legislature:

On behalf of Catholic Social Services (CSS) and our Board of Trustees, I would like to express support for HB 298, creating a food security task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

During Fiscal Year 2021, CSS served over 12,000 people across Anchorage. By working closely with our clients, we understand how food insecurity in Alaska impacts their lives and know that the need for improved food systems is great. One of our programs, St. Francis House Food Pantry, works on this challenge directly, providing food to an average of 1,180 families each month, and distributing 690,000 pounds of food last year alone.

We see firsthand the effects of food insecurity on our community. During Fiscal Year 2021, over 10,000 people in the Anchorage area received food from St. Francis House. These 10,000 people are just a small portion of people across the state directly and negatively impacted by Alaska's food insecurity.

Our Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services (RAIS) program also works to combat food insecurity in Anchorage. Through agricultural programming, we are working to strengthen local food systems, provide fresh and locally grown produce to underserved neighborhoods, and provide clients with the opportunity to become food entrepreneurs. We are seeing the positive impact this type of programming is having on our community at a local scale – 14 clients made over \$12,000 through FIG during the growing season and provided local fresh produce to the community while gaining job and language skills. If initiatives like these were focused on statewide through HB 298, I believe we would see amazing results.

Food systems are complex and require creative thought and targeted effort. The food security task force created by HB 298 will consider multiple facets of our food system while also giving communities across Alaska a voice at the table. This type of focused work will result in better outcomes for our local economy and those in need.

Food is key to permanent stability. When our families and communities are fed and nourished, our communities will thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Dempsey".

Robin Dempsey

Chief Executive Officer, Catholic Social Services
rdempsey@cssalaska.org | 907-222-7351



TCS-22-011

February 22, 2022

Representative Liz Snyder
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Snyder,

By operating the Copper River Native Association's (CRNA) Food Bank, I have learned there are many people here in the Copper River Basin who do not have enough to eat or the funds to purchase food. Last fiscal year, we served over 550 individuals comprising over 250 households who received supplemental food from our food bank. CRNA serve households from Slana and Mentasta to Chitina and McCarthy and out to Eureka and many communities in between these areas. Several people have told me that if it were not for this food bank; they would not have eaten, when this comment includes their children not eating, the statement really hits most people's hearts.

I highly encourage all legislators to endorse and/vote for HB 298 to establish an Alaska Food Strategy Task Force to ensure food security for all Alaskans, especially those in areas where food is not always plentiful (for instance, in many rural and/or remote areas of the state). This task force could be the difference between families eating or going hungry in the upcoming months and years. Even in many urban communities throughout the state, there are people who go to bed hungry many, if not most, nights of their lives. I, for one, would like to see this trend eliminated so that all Alaskans are able to eat regularly and have the proper nutrition to enable them to live more happy and productive lives.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to express my opinion about HB 298. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at either my work number: 907-822-8849 or my cell number: 907-259-3648.

Sincerely,

Irene M. Brooks
Food Bank Community Worker



February 21, 2022

Dear Members of the Legislature:

I am writing to express the Food Bank of Alaska's support for HB 298 to form a food security task force that will develop a robust statewide strategy to enhance Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and grow our local food economies.

The Food Bank of Alaska provides food to three partner distribution organizations and more than 150 partner agencies in communities across the state. In any given week, 6,300 Alaska households turn to Food Bank of Alaska's network of food pantries, soup kitchens, senior centers, and other programs for food assistance. We serve an estimated 51,900 unique households or almost 155,000 people annually. HB 298 will bolster our goal of ensuring Alaskans have enough nutritious food to lead healthy lives.

Alaska's geography creates unique barriers to food production and access. Bringing together different stakeholders of Alaska's food system will play a vital role in overcoming these challenges. The HB 298 food security task force will concentrate recommendations on advancing Alaska's agricultural industry, strengthening our state programs, and bolstering food security efforts. All Alaskans benefit from comprehensive food security, whether they live in rural or urban communities.

Creating a food security task force will help alleviate food insecurity statewide, and we are excited to support HB 298.

Sincerely,

Cara Durr
Chief of Advocacy and Public Policy
cdurr@foodbankofalaska.org
907-222-3113

Arielle Wiggin

From: jenn@ketchikanagriculture.org
Sent: Wednesday, February 23, 2022 3:31 PM
To: Rep. Liz Snyder
Subject: HB298 - Food Strategy Task Force - Letter of Support

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

I'm writing today on behalf of the Ketchikan Agricultural Producers Association to show our enthusiastic support of HB 298, creating a food strategy task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

The Ketchikan Agricultural Producer's Association (KAPA) is a nonprofit organization committed to making improvements to Ketchikan Gateway Borough and surrounding community food systems. Our organizational mission, to create food security and economic opportunity for the greater Ketchikan Gateway community by aggregating resources, encouraging local agricultural production, and improving the food system, is directly aligned with HB 298's intent.

KAPA was formed in response to the demonstrated lack of security in our local food system over the past two years - empty grocery shelves, national food waste, underserved populations in our community going hungry, and more. We have great challenges ahead of us, but have hope that this proposed task force can help lay the groundwork to transform our statewide food system into a more localized, inclusive, equitable, and environmentally sustainable one.

The formation of a diverse and far-reaching food security task force would offer Alaska a chance to move toward greater food security for all Alaskans. We are in full support of HB 298.

All the best,

Jennifer Brown
President
Ketchikan Agricultural Producers Association PO Box 5555 Ketchikan AK 99901
949-432-0188



Anchor Gardens

2515 A Street
Anchorage, AK 99503
[\(907\) 677-8490](tel:(907)677-8490)
anchorgardensanc@gmail.com
www.anchorgardens.org

2.22.22

Honorable members of the legislature,

I'm writing on behalf of Anchor Gardens to show support for HB298, which creates a food strategy task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

Anchor Gardens is an organization sponsored by the non-profit NeighborworksAlaska. We started at the beginning of the pandemic providing supplies, encouragement, resources and most importantly, a coach in every neighborhood, to anyone in the Municipality who wants to garden. A side benefit to working with neighbors is that we are building a much stronger, more resilient municipality. These are things exactly what HB 298's intention is.

Pre-pipeline days so many more people had gardens and took food security more seriously, now we are so dependent on the grocery stores. Since the pandemic many in Anchorage have been awakened to the lack of food security there really is. What a perfect time to pass HB 298. The proposed task force can help bring the focus even more to the forefront. It will lay the groundwork to transform our food system into a more localized, inclusive, equitable and environmentally sustainable one; a system that Anchor Gardens plans to play a large part in.

Please pass HB 298, so that a diverse and far-reaching food security task force could move Alaska forward toward greater food security, not just in Anchorage, but across Alaska. We strongly support HB298.

Sincerely,

Cindee Karns, Co-founder
Anchor Gardens



INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES & EXTENSION

University of Alaska Fairbanks

Letter of Support for the Alaska Food Strategy Task Force

Date: February 22, 2022

TO: Hon. Representative Liz Snyder

FR: Pete Pinney, Interim Director
UAF Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Extension

RE: Support for the Alaska Food Strategy Task Force as presented in HB 298

The proposed Alaska Food Strategy Task Force is an excellent addition to the various discussions and efforts statewide that promote everything from production to consumption of food, including nutrition security, health initiatives and regulatory impediments to new and beginning farmers.

We look forward to having all households aware of agriculture's increased potential as a viable industry that can lead to self-sufficiency, workforce development and food sovereignty for all communities.

As we discussed at the Farm Bureau convention in Anchorage, this is an opportune time to align all those associated with this issue in a similar direction for the benefit of all Alaskans in a bipartisan fashion.

Our institute is primed and ready to assist you in any way possible. Thank you for this mechanism to move us forward.

March 1, 2022

From:
Glenna Gannon
UAF Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Extension
PO Box 757200
Fairbanks, AK 99775


Dear members of the Legislature,

It is with enthusiasm that I write this letter of support for HB 298, which would create a task force focused on creating a strategic and robust strategy for strengthening Alaska's food system and increasing food security for Alaskans. As research and outreach faculty with the University of Alaska Fairbanks, I work on projects that address food system needs, and provide food security-focused outreach for Alaskans. I engage with a broad cross-section of Alaskans on a daily basis, from those who are engaged in producing food for themselves and fellow citizens, to academics who are interested in conducting research that seek to understand what a changing climate could mean for Alaska's ability to feed itself. From my professional perspective, I see the creation of the proposed task force as a positive step forward for Alaska's economy, food security and overall self-reliance.

As a state, we have both great challenges and opportunities before us with regard to our food system. For instance, our vulnerability to transpiration disruptions is of paramount concern, but has also sparked a much-needed conversation about what Alaska can do to be more prepared and self-sufficient in terms of our food security. This state-wide dialogue happens to be taking place at a moment in time when Alaska is poised to strategically grow a sustainable agriculture sector in the context an expanding growing environment, and make critical decisions about how to best steward our natural resources, which include an abundance of wild foods that rural and urban populations alike rely on.

I am confident that the proposed task force would be instrumental in transforming Alaska's food system for the better into a more inclusive, localized and sustainable one through collaboration from stakeholders across the state. The stated objectives of the proposed HB 298 would fulfill what I perceive as a great need for our state and its citizenry.

Sincerely,



Glenna Gannon
Assistant Professor of Sustainable Food Systems, IANRE

To: Alaska Legislature
From: Tyler Kornelis, Board Chairperson, Kodiak Harvest Food Cooperative
Subject: Support for HB 298 – Alaska Food Strategy Task Force
Date: February 22, 2022

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

I am writing today on behalf of the Kodiak Harvest Food Cooperative to show our support of HB 298, creating a food strategy task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food system, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

Kodiak Harvest Food Cooperative is a community-owned cooperative started in 2015 by a dedicated group of citizens who wanted to have more locally grown options. It has steadily grown, and we now have over 550 members (and growing) in the Kodiak region. Our mission is to provide Kodiak communities with quality food choices that are locally sourced, economically sustainable, and environmentally responsible while promoting education and engagement.

We buy from local producers all over the island (including from some of our rural village communities) and from across the state. One year ago we received the USDA Local Food Promotion Program Grant, which will allow us to open a food hub and storefront. We are working to increase the volume of Alaska Grown foods as much as possible. However, the past two years has revealed more clearly than ever a tremendous lack of security within our Alaska food system – shipping delays, food waste, increased hunger, and not enough local production to feed our citizens.

The formation of a diverse and far-reaching food security task force would offer Alaska a chance to move toward greater food security for all Alaskans, which leads Kodiak Harvest Food Cooperative to support HB 298.

Best regards,



Tyler Kornelis
Chairperson, Kodiak Harvest Food Cooperative Board of Directors
Email: info@kodiakharvest.org | Mobile: 907-654-5620

Arielle Wiggin

From: Jeanette Pedginski <49thstar@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 22, 2022 12:38 PM
To: Rep. Liz Snyder
Subject: HB 298 Letter of Support

February 21, 2022

Honorable Members of the Legislature:

I'm writing today on behalf of myself and the Kenai Local Food Connection to show our enthusiastic support of HB 298, creating a food strategy task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

The tagline of Kenai Local Food Connection is "Eat Local Food. Nourish Our Communities." The goals of the proposed food system strategy task force are directly in line with our goals, and will help accomplish them at a state-wide level, rather than just in the Central Kenai Peninsula.

For the past year, members of the Kenai Local Food Connection have participated in a project funded by a grant to the Alaska Food Policy Council, the Regional Food Systems Partnership Project. We have been encouraged and inspired by others across the state who are working on local food systems issues. I believe each participant feels empowered by the networking connections that have been made and renewed. The proposed task force already has a strong base of potential participants and knowledge through AFPC's work.

This proposed task force can help lay the groundwork to transform our food system into a more localized, inclusive, equitable, and environmentally sustainable one. Through the collaboration from stakeholders across Alaska's food system (businesses, government, individuals, nonprofit entities, hospitals, schools, prisons), recommendations on policy, programs, and investments can help achieve this. The formation of a diverse and far-reaching food security task force would offer Alaska a chance to move toward greater food security for all Alaskans. We are in full support of HB 298.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Pedginski

Kenai Local Food Connection Member



Nome Community Center, Inc.

Post Office Box 98
Nome, Alaska 99762
Website: www.nomecc.org

Phone: 907-443-5259
Fax: 907-443-2990
rschneider@nomecc.org

February 22, 2022

Dear Members of the Legislature,

On behalf of Nome Community Center, in Nome Alaska, I would like to express support for HB 298, creating a food security task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

Nome is located on the western edge of the state, off the road system and with a climate that prohibits us from growing enough foods to supplement what we have to purchase from two general stores. In a recent study, it was identified that 50% of the households in Nome fall below the national median income. That relates to a high number of families that need additional food supports.

There are factors that influence the availability of food in our community, where the cost of groceries is exorbitant and supply chain issues quickly result in empty store shelves. Our community relies heavily on subsistence in addition to our cash economy. We have a small community garden that could be expanded and filled with crops that do well in extreme climates. Supports to further growing in rural Alaska would contribute toward improved health outcomes.

Throughout Alaska, access to healthy food is threatened by poverty and lack of effective infrastructure and policy. At the same time, our Alaska food systems are incredibly rich with a diversity of cultures and plant and animal life. A food security task force will help shape law and policy that reflect the unique strengths and weaknesses of Alaska's food systems.

Sincerely,

Rhonda M. Schneider

Rhonda Schneider
Executive Director

Alaska Farmers Markets Association
www.alaskafarmersmarkets.org
3734 Ben Walters Ln, Homer, AK 99603
info@alaskafarmersmarkets.org



February 22, 2022

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Farmers Market Association to show our immense support for House Bill 298, which creates a food strategy task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security for all Alaskans, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

The Alaska Farmers Market Association is a nonprofit with the mission to support and promote vibrant and sustainable farmers' markets throughout Alaska. In 2022, we added our support of food hubs, farm stands, and CSAs to our mission. In 2005 the Division of Agriculture listed 13 markets throughout the State. In 2014 that number grew to 37, and in 2022, we counted 56 with more in planning stages.

Farmers' markets are good for farmers and good for the communities they serve. For farmers, farmers markets provide a place where farmers can reconnect with consumers and capture retail dollars for their fresh, high-quality products. For communities, farmers markets are family-friendly, community-building events that bring neighbors together, attract retail activity to surrounding businesses, create forums for civic education and involvement and provide direct access to Alaska's agricultural bounty. HB 298 will help us ensure we can continue our mission, by offering a systems approach to addressing our food system challenges, helping greater equity, creating expanded markets and opportunities, and supporting Alaska's food producers - all of which will create greater food security for Alaskans.

We commend the Alaska Legislature for working on this critical issue for Alaska. The Alaska Farmers Market Association fully supports HB298.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad St. Pierre". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brad St. Pierre
Alaska Farmers Market Association, Board President
Tanana Valley Farmers Market, Director
Goose Foot Farm, Fairbanks, Owner/ Operator



(907) 789-6184 • SOUTHEASTAKFOODBANK@ACSalaska.net

PO BOX 33681 JUNEAU AK 99803 • 10200 CRAZY HORSE DRIVE
WWW.SEAfB.ORG

February 18, 2022

Dear Representative Snyder & Members of the Alaska Legislature,

On behalf of the Southeast Alaska Food Bank (SEAFB) board of directors, executive director, staff, our volunteers and those we serve, we want to express our support for HB 298. We are excited for the idea of creating a food security task force to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to strengthen Alaska's food systems, improve food security, and encourage more food to be locally grown.

Over the course of the last two years we have had to change many ways we function at the Southeast Alaska Food Bank. We have taken on new members, held emergency food pantries, and doubled the amount of regular weekly pantry's we hold here at the food bank. With all these changes we also have had to expand our personnel to keep up with the demand. We have gone from a staff of one, to three total employees over the last two years. **The chart below is from a recent Feeding America graphic.**

What Hunger Looks Like in Alaska

In Alaska, 86,970 people are facing hunger - and of them 28,160 are children.

1 in 8 people



face hunger.

1 in 6 children face hunger.

People facing hunger in Alaska are estimated to report needing

\$53,905,000 more per year to meet their food needs.

The average cost of a meal in Alaska is \$3.63. Data from Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap study.

Rising food prices are a crisis for families who are already struggling to put food on the table

When your family budget is stretched to the breaking point, higher prices at the grocery store can often mean going hungry. Food banks also get hit by higher costs as they try to stock their shelves to serve their communities.

Everyday grocery prices have increased by up to 7.8% in the past year

12 million children in the US face hunger

The price of beef has increased by 12.2% in the past year alone. Eggs have gotten more expensive too and cost 9.9% more than last year. These changes can have a huge impact on families whose budgets are already stretched to the breaking point.

The effects of the Pandemic are still very much with us as we continue to serve between 150 - 190 people weekly at our 2 food pantries here at the Southeast Alaska Food Bank (Pre-Pandemic we would see 60-90 people per week). Since the beginning of 2022 we have averaged 182 people per week being served through our pantries). In fiscal year 2021 we disbursed over 500,000 lbs. of food to our 40 partner agencies and the public food pantries, for the 4th year in a row.

With sincere appreciation and thanks,



Bob Piorkowski
Board President – SEAFB



Chris Schapp
Executive Director - SEAFB