

Dear Members of the House Fisheries Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 304.

Alaska already has Chambers of Commerce and tourism-promotion organizations whose core mission is to produce economic reports and market the value of visitor spending. Creating a new, dedicated state funding stream to produce an additional report duplicates work that the Department of Commerce and local Chambers already perform. The practical effect is that the State of Alaska would be funding what will function as a lobbying document for sportfishing guides, lodges, charters, and tourism businesses.

This raises a larger concern: instead of the Chamber promoting tourism interests, the bill positions the State itself in a way that can work against subsistence users. I find this troubling!

We do not need a state dedicated fund to lobbying and that's exactly what this is.

According to publicly available figures, approximately 414,000 sportfishing licenses were sold in 2022. Under this bill, that would generate nearly half a million dollars in surcharge revenue. I believe the people of Alaska deserves clarity on where this money is intended to go, who would receive it, and why such a large sum is necessary for a report that could be produced using information already collected by Chambers of Commerce. The Commissioner could request this data directly at no additional cost.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to reconsider whether this surcharge and new reporting mandate are necessary or fiscally responsible.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Carrie Harris
