



March 16, 2026

Chair Senator Kelly Merrick
Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee
Alaska State Legislature, State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for Senate Bill 268 – Seafood Processing Workforce Stability

Dear Chair Merrick and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Pacific Seafood Processors Association (PSPA), I am writing to express our support for Senate Bill 268, relating to minimum paid sick leave requirements for individuals employed in seafood processing. PSPA is a trade association which represents seafood processors with 50 facilities in 22 coastal communities across Alaska, from Ketchikan to Cordova to Kodiak to Unalaska to Bristol Bay. PSPA companies buy fish from thousands of independent commercial fishermen across the state and in almost every fishery.

The health of the seafood industry is critical to Alaska, as it generates \$6 billion in economic activity in Alaska annually, creates 42,000 direct jobs, is the state’s largest manufacturing and export sector, and lowers costs of transportation for all Alaskans.

Alaska’s seafood processing sector operates under uniquely challenging conditions. Processing facilities are often located in highly remote environments, where workforce availability, housing, transportation, operational continuity, and servicing of commercial fishermen are tightly interconnected. These realities require policies that are carefully tailored to the industry’s structure, while still supporting the health and well-being of employees.

Senate Bill 268 reflects a thoughtful and balanced approach. It recognizes the intent of the voter-approved paid sick leave initiative while also addressing the distinct nature of seafood processing operations and connection to commercial fishermen. In the original language of the ballot measure, an exemption was made to the mandatory paid sick leave section for fishermen, agricultural and aquaculture workers, and shrimp “hand-pickers”.

By aligning seafood processors more closely with the exemptions already provided by law, this legislation recognizes the interconnected nature of fishermen and processors in the Alaska seafood industry, and ensures commercial fishermen will continue to get uninterrupted services, and greater consistency of application across similarly situated industries.

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Importantly, SB 268 supports workforce stability and operational planning in an industry that already includes high risk and unpredictability of wild fisheries. Predictable and workable leave policies help employers maintain safe, efficient operations while continuing to provide thousands of jobs, and purchase fish in an efficient manner from thousands of commercial fishermen, maintaining high quality and value, and keeping fishermen fishing.

We appreciate the Legislature's consideration of this issue and respectfully urge your support for Senate Bill 268.

Sincerely,



Julie Decker, President
Pacific Seafood Processors Association