



March 24th, 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:

My name is Chelsae Radell, and I am a resident of Kodiak, Alaska where I represent Pacific Seafood as the Fisheries Policy Specialist. Pacific Seafood operates processing plants in Kodiak, Seward, and Wrangell. We have grown since 1941 to proudly employ more than 3,500 team members across eight states, including approximately 700 in Alaska in the winter months, over 300 of whom are local residents.

On behalf of Pacific Seafood, I am writing in support of Senate Bill 268, relating to minimum paid sick leave requirements for individuals employed in seafood processing.

While paid sick leave is an important employee benefit, the cumulative operational impacts on seafood processors can be substantial. When viewed employee by employee, the impact may appear manageable, but when those absences are concentrated during peak production periods, they create significant strain on plant operations, remaining staff, and the ability to process fish efficiently. This challenge is especially pronounced during high-volume runs when every available worker plays a critical role to offload and process fishermen's deliveries.

The impacts are also felt at the end of the season. As production naturally slows and operations begin to scale down, facilities must reduce staffing accordingly. However, when remaining employees simultaneously use accrued sick leave late in the season, it can further erode already limited capacity, affecting processing efficiency and the timely servicing of commercial fishermen.

Looking beyond a single season, accrued sick leave obligations also present meaningful long-term exposure. Based on internal estimates, the amount of accrued paid sick leave that could be paid out across the workforce represents a significant financial and operational



consideration for a seasonal, wild-harvest industry operating on narrow margins and compressed production timelines.

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

Senate Bill 268 reflects a thoughtful and balanced approach. It preserves the intent of the voter-approved paid sick leave initiative while recognizing the distinct operational realities of seafood processing and its close connection to commercial fishing. The original ballot language included exemptions for fishermen, agricultural and aquaculture workers, and shrimp hand-pickers. Aligning seafood processors more closely with these exemptions acknowledges the interconnected nature of fishermen and processors and helps ensure uninterrupted services to Alaska's harvesting fleet.

Importantly, SB 268 supports workforce stability and operational planning in an industry already defined by risk and unpredictability. Clear and workable leave policies allow processors to maintain safe and efficient operations, continue providing thousands of jobs, and purchase and handle fish in a timely manner, maintaining quality, maximizing value, and keeping fishermen fishing.

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

Kind Regards,



Chelsae M. Radell