



Alaska Food Policy Council

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RE: Letter of Support, Establishment of an Alaska Department of Agriculture

Dear Commissioner John Boyle:

My name is Robbi Mixon from Homer, and I am the Executive Director of the Alaska Food Policy Council and the Director of Alaska's USDA Islands and Remote Areas Regional Food Business Center. I also co-authored the 2022 Governors Food Security and Independence Task Force report. I have over 15 years of experience in Alaska food systems- including being a farmhand for four years, managing a farmers market for 10 years, starting one of the state's first food hubs, and relaunching the Alaska Farmers Market Association (which started as a project within the Division of Ag). The Alaska Division of Agriculture has been a steady partner in all of these endeavors- from helping promote markets and providing specialty crop block grants, down to providing AK Grown marketing materials.

The Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC) is a nonprofit organization committed to improving Alaska's food system. AFPC was established in 2010 to create a healthier, more secure, and more self-reliant Alaska by improving our food systems. Our partners include a broad cross-section of Alaskans and organizations that work to address all aspects of food systems, including production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management. We believe that improving the State's food security will result in a healthy, self-reliant, prosperous Alaskan future.

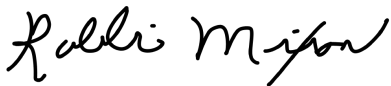
Alaska is one of two states without a department of agriculture - it's time to elevate agriculture's importance to addressing food security to a cabinet-level position. I am writing to express our support for creating a Department of Agriculture for Alaska. Alaska currently imports 90 to 95% of its food, leaving our families, communities, and economy vulnerable to supply chain disruptions, rising costs, and climate change impacts.

A Department of Agriculture would be a strategic investment in our state's future, strengthening local food systems and ensuring Alaskans have reliable access to fresh, nutritious food. A dedicated department could:

- **Increase Food Security** – By supporting local farmers, fishers, and ranchers, we can reduce our dependence on imports and ensure Alaskans have increased access to Alaska-grown food;
- **Boost Economic Growth** – Agriculture is a growing industry with the potential to create jobs, small businesses, and market opportunities across rural and urban communities. Every dollar spent on local food stays in Alaska, strengthening our economy;
- **Expand Research** – Investing in season extension technologies and cold hardy crop varieties will make it easier for Alaskan producers to thrive in our unique environments;
- **Enhance Disaster Preparedness** – Supply chain disruptions—whether from pandemics or natural disasters— have highlighted the risks of relying on outside food sources. A Department of Agriculture would prioritize food resilience by diversifying our food production and distribution networks.

This is not just about farming: it's about ensuring that every Alaskan, regardless of location, income, or background, has access to affordable, locally produced food. A Department of Agriculture will empower our communities, strengthen our economy, and safeguard our food security for generations to come. I urge you to support this critical step toward a more self-reliant Alaska, supporting farms of all sizes and focus. Thank you for your time, and I welcome any questions.

Kindly,



Robbi Mixon, Executive Director
Alaska Food Policy Council