

Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Bob Murphy, and I live in Kodiak and am representing myself. I am a set gillnet fisherman where I fish in Port Moller located on the Bering Sea side of Alaska Peninsula. I am in support of HB 117. This bill will allow set gillnet permit holders that fish as family groups, which many set gillnet operators are, to continue doing what they have been doing since statehood or even prior. Adoption of this bill into law will have no change to long-standing practices.

As you know the commercial fishing industry has been through some difficult times in the last few years. Long-time seafood processors going out of business or large-scale consolidation is occurring. Commercial seafood processors and fishermen are struggling with high costs to run their businesses, and the volume of fish and inflation are not helping matters. I have concern that if this bill is not adopted and under the current interpretation of how set gillnet salmon fisheries are to be conducted with multiple permit holders in a family setting, that it may negatively disrupt the way these operations have occurred for decades. If the current regulations are not changed, it very well may break up or eliminate some of these family fishing groups which may force some to no longer find it financially worthwhile to fish which will impact local communities through lost income to individuals and lost tax revenue to local municipalities as well as the state. I think we could all agree that this is not in anyone's best interest for this to occur.

Without HB 117, there are issues such as safety by trying to keep fish separate in small skiffs by adding additional fish totes which may have ice or slush ice and the added weight of the totes if space is even available which it isn't on many skiffs is a concern, and significant additional time spent completing fish tickets often in difficult sea conditions while tied alongside a large tender vessel can be dangerous. There is no biological concern to the resource the way fisheries have been managed in the past and the state will still manage fisheries the same way. These are just a few reasons that support the passage of HB 117.

There are some family groups in the area which fish around where I fish in the Village of Nelson Lagoon. Set gillnet fishing is prominent in Nelson Lagoon and extremely important to the community as salmon fishing is the main source of income for the community and HB117 would help them practice the way they have fished for many years.

For 35 years I have been involved in the commercial fisheries in this area and most of that was as a biologist working for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game until I retired. I am truly thankful for how this process has worked so far. Where a group of stakeholders were told what they were doing for a very long time is no longer legal, the stakeholders then working with the Departments of Fish and Game and Public Safety to help write the language that would fix the issue, and then the State Legislature seeking to correct the

issue. This is a great example of how the government works for the people and I sincerely thank all those involved with this issue to this point and in the near future to get it corrected prior to the 2025 commercial salmon fishing season.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify and hope you will support HB 117. Thank you all for your service, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Bob Murphy  
Kodiak, AK 99615