

Chair Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

I am Erik Obrien, a participate in Kodiak's Setnet fishery; I am writing in support of HB117. The bold text below expresses my request for your consideration, with background provided here.

I am part of a multigenerational fishing family. My parents first traveled to work in Bristol Bay's processing plants and later returned to live in Kodiak. They purchased their first setnet permit in 1977. I was born in 1980, followed by two brothers. In 1988 my parent separated, and our family purchased our second permit. My brothers and extended siblings were always part of the fishing operation. I began crewing full time in 1992, about that same time, my younger brothers became paid members of the family operation, helping around the camp. In 2002, as my parents became empty nesters and older fishermen, they transferred the two permits to my brothers and I to run as a family unit. Two permits did not provide sufficient revenue to split between my brothers, parents and reinvestment in the fishery. We purchased additional permits in 2006, 2009, 2011, and 2020, totaling 7 permits for three now grown "brothers" and three elder parents. During this time every one of us, several spouses, cousins and our own children have held our permits, and never once was there any question we were one family operation. More than that, we could not operate without everyone's support, direct and indirect.

Setnet fishing is a physically hard and long season, which does not always fit with life's schedule. Kids have school and sports, parents have kids and obligations, grandparent have time and aging bodies. Everyone only has a short window between our late teens and 50s when we all have the physical abilities to operate a long setnet season, but it takes every one of us to make the operation work for 50 yeas as our family has done.

My kids are too young, and my parents are too old to fully execute the setnet fishery today, but I would not do this if both were not there to help and support me. It is not feasible to consider each permit holder an individual and separate business, that is just not true, and not how we have ever operated.

HB117 corrects a misinterpretation that a setnet permit is a single business venture, and treats it as it has always been, a cooperative venture, primarily executed along family units. Breaking that assumption creates a regulatory burden that is unfair and impractical to implement. **Following the reinterpretation issued in 2024 is not workable and will only result in making rulebreakers of my family, and most other Kodiak setnet operations, where the single permit operation is now almost entirely defunct due to economic realities.** Please consider passing this bill so we can get back to managing our fishing business how things have always operated.

I close with a heartfelt thank you to Chair Stutes and all member of the Housing Fisheries Committee working for common sense regulations that help Alaskan families and businesses.

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