



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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March 27, 2023

Chair Jesse Bjorkman
Senate Labor and Commerce
State Capitol Room 9
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Support for SB 93 – Fishermen’s Fund; Vessel Owner Claims

Dear Chair Bjorkman and Committee Members,

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 37 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state, and the federal fisheries off Alaska’s coast.

UFA supports increasing the total allowance per claim from Fishermen’s Fund for injury, disablement, heart attacks and vessel owner’s protection and indemnity (P&I) deductible. Costs of injuries, hospital visits, and deductibles have continued to rise over the years and by increasing the allowance per claim, the Fund can better assist fishermen in their time of need. UFA also supports making the total allowances per claim the same for injury claims and vessel owner deductible reimbursements. In keeping the amount the same across all categories, it provides parity for participants across the industry.

Fishermen’s Fund is financed through revenue received from each resident and nonresident commercial fisherman’s license and permit fee. The Fund was established in 1951 and provides for the treatment and care of Alaska licensed commercial fishermen who are injured while engaged in commercial fishing activity in Alaska. The Fund is a payer of last resort, meaning that benefits are awarded only after full consideration of other coverage (private health coverage/ vessel insurance, or public programs). Over the years, the Fund has seen a drop in claims and as a result, the Fund is very healthy and continues to grow.

In addition to reasons articulated in previous testimony before the legislature by the Fund’s administrator for the continued growth of the Fund, UFA believes that there is not as much awareness of what the Fund is and what it covers as there has been in the past. Increased outreach to industry and education provided to healthcare providers could lead to greater

utilization of the Fund and assisting more commercial fishermen at a time when they need it most.

Regards,



Matt Alward
President



Tracy Welch
Executive Director

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers • Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association • Alaska Scallop Association • Alaska Trollers Association
Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association • Area M Seiners Association • At-sea Processors Association • Bristol Bay Fishermen's Association
Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association • Bristol Bay Reserve • Cape Barnabas, Inc. • Concerned Area "M" Fishermen
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association • Cordova District Fishermen United • Douglas Island Pink and Chum • Freezer Longline Coalition • Fishing Vessel
Owners Assn Groundfish Forum • Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association • Kodiak Crab Alliance Cooperative • Kodiak Regional Aquaculture
Association • Kodiak Seiners Association • North Pacific Fisheries Association • Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association • Northwest
Setnetters Association • Petersburg Vessel Owners Association • Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation • Purse Seine Vessel Owner
Association • Seafood Producers Cooperative • Southeast Alaska Herring Conservation Alliance • Southeast Alaska Fisherman's Alliance • Southeast
Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association • Southeast Alaska Seiners
Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association • United Catcher Boats • United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters
Valdez Fisheries Development Association