



PSVOA

PURSE SEINE VESSEL OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

1900 W Nickerson St., Ste. 320 ■ Seattle, WA 98119 ■ Tel: (206) 283-7733 ■ Fax: (206) 283-7795 ■ www.psvoa.org

April 26, 2023

Senator Matt Claman
State Capitol Room 429
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Proposed Amendment to SB 93- Fishermen's Fund Vessel Owner Claims

Dear Senator Claman:

The Purse Seine Vessel Owners Association ("PSVOA") represents a diverse group of harvesting families in Alaska and along the West Coast. PSVOA strongly supports the proposed amendment to SB 93 that adds the term "viral infections" to the list of occupational diseases for which Fishermen's Fund is authorized to pay medical expenses incurred by commercial fishermen.

Fishing vessel owners are required by federal maritime law to pay the medical bills of crewmembers who become ill or are injured while in the service of the vessel. Most commercial fishing vessel owners in Alaska purchase protection and indemnity insurance (P&I) to cover this liability. However, since 2021, insurers have included a provision in P&I policies which excludes coverage for liability arising out of illnesses caused by viral infections, such as the coronavirus. Accordingly, nearly all commercial fishing vessel owners currently operating in Alaska do not have insurance coverage for their legal obligation to pay a crewmember's medical bills if they are stricken with coronavirus.

The proposed amendment to SB 93 addresses this gap in insurance coverage by allowing Fishermen's Fund to pay crewmember medical bills related to the treatment of viral infections which occur while a crewmember is in the service of the vessel. Thank you for bringing this amendment forward.

Sincerely,

Robert Kehoe

Robert Kehoe, Executive Director



Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance

1008 Fish Creek Rd

Juneau, AK 99801

Email: kathy@seafa.org

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Fax: 907-917-5470

Website: <http://www.seafa.org>

March 6, 2023

House Special Committee on Fisheries
Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99811

RE: SUPPPORT HB 92 - FISHERMEN'S FUND: VESSEL OWNER CLAIMS

Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance (SEAFA) supports HB 92 raising the amount a vessel owner can be entitled to from \$5,000 to \$10,000 to cover their deductible. Industry has shown that the fishermen's fund balance was not severely impacted as feared at the \$5,000 level when the legislation was enacted.

There is another fishermen's fund issue that the committee might wish to consider addressing in this legislation. Most insurance policies don't cover fishermen's claims for COVID and COVID related medical expenses. We have recently found out that the fishermen's fund cannot cover COVID claims either without a statutory change to specifically include coverage for this medical condition. Unfortunately, a vessel owner is fully responsible for medical and other expenses if a crewmember is diagnosed and treated for COVID.

SEAFA is a multi-gear/multi-species non-profit commercial fishing association that represents our members involved in the salmon, crab, and shrimp fisheries mainly in Southeast Alaska and longline fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska and Southeast. In addition to our advocacy for our members we have a vessel insurance pool associated with our Association. If you have any additional questions, please reach out to our office at any time.

Sincerely,

Kathy Hansen
Executive Director



April 26, 2023

Phil Doherty – Executive Director
Southeast Alaska Seiners Association
P.O. Box 6238, Ketchikan, AK 99901
info@seiners.net

Senator Matt Claman
State Capitol Room 429
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Proposed Amendment to SB 93- Fishermen's Fund Vessel Owner Claims

Dear Senator Claman:

The Southeast Alaska Seiner's Association (SEAS) represents the majority of the 200 purse seine fishermen that fish in Southeast Alaska. **SEAS supports the proposed amendment to SB 93** that adds the term "viral infections" to the list of occupational diseases for which Fishermen's Fund is authorized to pay medical expenses incurred by commercial fishermen.

SEAS 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.

Most commercial fishing vessel owners who operate in Alaska purchase protection and indemnity ("P&I") insurance to cover this legal liability to crewmembers. Beginning in 2020 and in response to the pandemic, underwriters have inserted exclusions in insurance policies, including P&I policies, excluding coverage for coronavirus related claims. 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.

SEAS agrees that raising the benefits level from \$5,000 to \$10,000 would greatly benefit the commercial fisheries in Alaska.

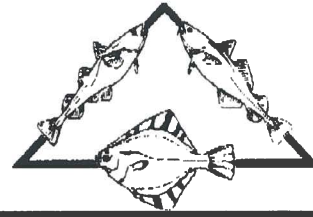
Sincerely,

Phil Doherty
Executive Director – SEAS
PO Box 6238
Ketchikan, AK 99901

Alaska Groundfish Data Bank

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Julie Bonney, Executive Director
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April 26, 2023

Senator Matt Claman
State Capitol Room 429
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: SB 93- Fishermen's Fund Vessel Owner Claims and Proposed Amendment

Dear Senator Claman:

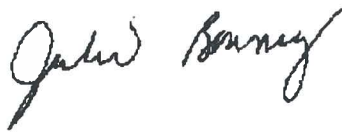
Alaska Groundfish Data Bank (AGDB) represents small and medium sized trawl catcher vessels that operate out of the port of Kodiak. Our members strongly support SB 93 and the proposed amendment that adds the term "viral infections" to the list of occupational diseases for which Fishermen's Fund is authorized to pay medical expenses incurred by commercial fishermen.

Fishing vessel owners are required by federal maritime law to pay the medical bills of crewmembers who become ill or are injured while in the service of the vessel. Most commercial fishing vessel owners in Alaska purchase protection and indemnity insurance (P&I) to cover this liability. However, since 2021, insurers have included a provision in P&I policies which excludes coverage for liability arising out of illnesses caused by viral infections, such as the coronavirus. Accordingly, nearly all commercial fishing vessel owners currently operating in Alaska do not have insurance coverage for their legal obligation to pay a crewmember's medical bills if they are stricken with coronavirus.

The proposed amendment to SB 93 addresses this gap in insurance coverage by allowing Fishermen's Fund to pay crewmember medical bills related to the treatment of viral infections which occur while a crewmember is in the service of the vessel.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Julie Bonney, Executive Director