

Dear Alaska House Fisheries Committee,

I write this message as a well-informed, environmental professional with a doctorate specialty in aquatic plant biology from Iowa State University. My background emphasizes biodiversity, cell biology and ecology of algae in freshwater and low salinity environments. I retired from Loyola University New Orleans as an emeritus professor of biology who held a distinguished professorship. I taught science to students who were majors in the natural sciences as well as non-science majors, on campus and at biological stations. I maintained an active research program including undergraduates who completed honors theses until I retired in 2017. I published my last peer reviewed paper in 2016, and just submitted another in February, 2025.

I am writing in very strong opposition to HB 111: Finfish Farms and Products. Alaska's wild fisheries are significant in supporting Alaska Native communities, filling our freezers, and driving our economy. Allowing non-native fish species to be farmed here poses a grave risk to our wild stocks, even in "contained" environments. Farming of non-native species should be avoided at all costs and frankly is a "no brainer". I also would add that fish farming frequently causes significant pollution to nearby natural waters via nutrient enrichment originating from fish farms, in addition to the disease aspects explained below. Feeding fish almost always stimulates excessive algal growth, potentially including off-flavor compounds that contaminate fish meat or even toxin producing strains. All of these costs in dollars must be included in any rigorous economic analysis.

Diseases can be spread by airborne vectors such as birds or during potential escape from enclosures such as floods or negligence. The rearing of farm fish in Alaska would also directly undermine efforts to market the unique taste and nutritional benefits of Alaska wild fisheries and directly compete in the marketplace with small boat harvesters. If the state legislature allows fish farming of non-salmon species, this would only make it easier for salmon farming to become a reality in the future. Please do not allow fish farming in Alaska and instead prioritize wild stocks when it comes to our food security. A renewed focus on sound management and protection of the spawning and rearing habitat of salmon and other species is the most effective and beneficial way of enhancing Alaska's food security. Please reject HB 111.

Sincerely,

Dr. James Wee

New Orleans, LA 70118-5324