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USAG'S MAIN PURPOSE IS TO PROTECT, SERVE AND ENHANCE SOUTHEAST ALASKA'S COMMERCIAL GILLNET FISHERY

March 26, 2025

Representative Louis Stutes

Chair House Fisheries Committee

Juneau Capitol Building Room 120

Juneau, Alaska

[House.fisheries@akleg.gov](mailto:House.fisheries@akleg.gov)

Dear Representative Stutes and committee members,

United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters, or USAG, is a fisheries advocacy organization that is dedicated to preserving the economic viability and sustainability of the SEAK drift gillnet fishery. We are well versed on the Board of Fisheries process, and have been active at meetings for decades.

USAG is opposed to HB 125. While we agree the current process can be frustrating, we do not believe this is the cure. Having hard line designations for Board members might seem like a good idea, we don't believe that it will make the process better and result in better Board members. This bill would make 2 subsistence seats that would be filled by AFN. I would remind AFN, and you, that there are many non-native subsistence users in the state that would lose voice. This bill would also make a science seat, appointed by NOAA. The Board already has a scientific expert on hand at every Board meeting. It's called the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Anyone can offer science at any meeting through the current process. The BOF is not a scientific exercise, but does consider science when

making difficult decisions. Being a good scientist does not qualify you as an arbiter. We are opposed to the idea the federal government should have a seat at a regulatory body regarding state resources. Currently, any Alaskan can submit their name to serve on the BOF. If HB 125 were to pass, it would take three of the seven Board seats out of the hands of the general public, and left to a federal agency, and a tribal organization.

We are aware that there are likely amendments to be seen for this bill, and we will follow and comment again if necessary. As always, we appreciate the opportunity to comment and your consideration of our position regarding this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Max Worhatch', with a stylized, flowing script.

Max Worhatch, Executive Director, USAG

