

I am forwarding this email on to you as I have learned that Senate Bill 128 and House Bill 140 are still in process. I was glad to hear that the EO was defeated. If these bills are much the same-I have the same concerns.

I did find out that there is a lime mine in North Pole. No one had informed me of that before. I understand that they have lime in powder form. Powered lime is difficult to apply. It flies around, doesn't feed properly without packing inside the fertilizer spreader, does not allow for even coverage of an established field. It would be wonderful if they could get it prilled. I am sure the cost of the equipment is very expensive, showing another need for help with cheap financing. Could the large sacks of prilled lime then

be delivered by train to the areas of the state that have train service? Would be wonderful for a farmer to be able to purchase local lime in a useable form at a reasonable price. Alaskan soils are largely in need of a lot of lime. The PH of the soil also helps with some weed control.

I talk to farmers in the lower 48 and they can get lime delivered and applied for \$50.00 an acre. Must be nice. It is a huge expense to apply as much as we need on our fields. We put as much on each year as we can possibly afford.

The cost of fertilizer, the cost of equipment, the distance to market, the unpredictable weather all make the cost to raise our crops high. Alaskan farmland can produce wonderful hay, grains, vegetables, berries, flowers, mushrooms etc. We need proper storage. If we could find ways to cut the costs, we could compete with the lower 48. We wouldn't need to ship so many products in. We would have fresher agricultural products, fresher food and dairy products. We would solve our food security problem. As a farmer, rancher or vegetable grower in this state we need help with these things. Put the money toward agricultural infrastructure -not more offices and more people in them. Encourage cheaper financing, grants for equipment, training in farming here in Alaska. Transportation for products to and from the farms.

Thank you for reading this,

Priscilla Mott

Senator Bjorkman,

I, too, am concerned about the Department of Agriculture for the state of Alaska. Over the years, I have seen many government officials bring too many of the practices and ideas

(from their experience in agriculture in other places) to bear on Alaskan farms and practices. What works in other states does not work here. I have been a farmer here in the Soldotna area since 1956. I have helped raise oats, rye, barley, wheat, nip oats and harvested them with binders. We planted huge vegetable gardens and raised many potatoes, all by hand. We planted hay fields and continue to get fields ready and plant them to increase our hayfield acres. We have learned much over the years. Putting hay up is very hard work. Equipment is extremely expensive. It is hard to get farm workers. I certainly cannot blame them. We need them so sporadically and with such little notice and we cannot control the weather. The cost of fertilizer and lime is so expensive. Fuel costs have been exorbitant. The cost of shipping supplies, equipment, lime and fertilizer is so high. The fuel surcharges add to that. The cost of building proper storage for the producer as well as the customer affects the market so much. The distance between many of the suppliers and the end users is also a factor.

I honestly don't think we need more offices and people in them, we need practical things to increase our ability to prosper. More agricultural land closer to the consumers. Less pressure on agricultural lands to be turned into subdivisions and retail uses. More infrastructure. More access to good new and used equipment. Low-cost financing. The farmer has it all at risk when a bad year comes around-and it will. Beautiful crops that cannot be harvested because the rain won't let up or cannot be saved after it is harvested because the storage is not in place because of the expense of building.

We don't get much help when the season is too wet. We don't have access to a safety net.

I was glad to see buildings included in the farm deferment rulings. Hopefully, that will help with the ability to build proper storage to be able to get our crops under cover and protected from the wet. Some initial low-cost financing would be very beneficial. Transportation to the end user is always a challenge. We have so few roads, none of them farm to market. We have little railroad coverage from farm to market. I have customers who have shipped hay to Kodiak by ferry in rented U-Haul's. I have had customers in Palmer, Anchorage, and Fairbanks who transported hay on their own trucks and trailers. The weather varies so much. We can have great baling weather here and 30 miles down the road it is raining cats and dogs. Having producing farm land closer to consumers is the way to go. Large operations are so risky. Using the latest machinery and methods and having proper storage would help but, especially, in the winter, traveling from the farm to your own ranch pulling a trailer full of hay is not ideal. I firmly believe that following a model of smaller acreage for our farms makes more sense than the big cooperate farms of elsewhere. Our climate is much like costal Europe-we can learn from them.

My husband and I try our best to produce high quality forage crops. We purchased an expensive small round baler/wrapper combi from Europe years ago to be able to produce a higher moisture hay that cures inside the wrap and will remain good feed in storage. We could not find one offered in the U.S. We had a terrible time finding wrap to fit our wrapper that was manufactured in the U.S. We had to order from Europe in early winter to be able to get it shipped to Canada and then trucked to a consolidator in Washington to have them ship it on to us. We had no U.S. suppliers for parts. We had to have new gears manufactured for us locally to be able to use the wrap we could find. We have now found a supplier for our wrap in the U.S. (still no parts supplier). We have to order in quantity to try to lessen the shipping cost.

Many over the years have wanted to do coops. I just don't see how they will ever work. Everyone would need the equipment at the same time. Some would get in their crops-the others would just have to watch theirs get rained on in the field. So, each farmer has to have their own equipment.

We would love to try a larger round baler and wrapper -again such a large investment, it is hard to justify. It costs so much more to raise hay here; and would we have the market for it? Agriculture is so inter dependent. When Point Mackenzie was being discussed, I questioned why the powers that be didn't want to approve plans for various kinds of operations: hay growers, dairy farmers, beef producers, sheep, goats, alpaca's, llama's, pigs, chickens, lumber (and sawdust), gravel, vegetable growers, a shop with mechanics to work on equipment and vehicles, transportation to market for the products. All were needed for carving out a new community, a new agricultural endeavor that would succeed. A new area where families could live on and work their lands, keep livestock and help cover each other's needs. I believe that is why none of the Ag projects in Alaska have truly succeeded. Too many rules, too few experienced people with knowledge of Alaska's unique challenges. Too few places to get really relevant knowledge. Many people have invested their lives and money and ended up losing it all. Land of course, will be needed. Allowing small farmers to grow and sell and get a farm deferment is vital. The land proposals I have heard about have not answered some of my questions. From what I have heard, the land would be leased to a person and that person would have to do all the improvements and get the land into production and then they could buy the land and own it. I have never been able to find out if they would be able to buy the land for what it was valued at when they initially leased it for or if the value would be the current value of the land. If it is the current value, I do not know who would or could do that. They would have provided all the money and labor for the improvements and they would not be able to work the land and have an off the farm paying job to cover the expenses too. They would have to pay again for the improvements they themselves had done to be able to keep their land. It

seems that is the way it went for the early colonists also. They endured the hardships, did the work, got the land to produce, built roads and cleared powerlines, lived in rugged conditions and then when others wanted to live comfortably on the land these farmers and ranchers had forged out of the wilderness, the pioneers were forced out by high taxes and modern civilization.

I do not believe an Alaskan Department of Agriculture will cure the problems. I do believe approaching it from a different angle would produce a better outcome. Schools having a FFA program. Funds being provided for training students on the farm for education credits and encouragement in choosing a career in agriculture or related fields. Meat and milk production here in the state. Local garden growers given access to facilities (are there any unused canneries that could be brought back into use?) to clean, process and store items for food security and sale to the public. Added value products could be produced also. There is much we can do. I have been so disappointed over the years hearing about and going to meetings that were to be discussing food security, fresh produce restaurants, agriculture etc. When I would ask what was being proposed (hoping to hear about programs or opportunities to encourage local production) all I ever heard was that the produce was going to be purchased in Washington, Oregon and California. That is already being done with local grocery stores-it would help producers in other states and the freight companies-not Alaska producers. Our Matanuska Dairy is gone, our meat plant is gone, many of the people who invested so much of themselves and their money in Point Mackenzie are gone. The Matanuska Valley (from watching the televised documentary) Project cost many lives and most of that land is now covered up with subdivisions. The United States is losing so much valuable farmland yearly (never to be reclaimed). Other nations, some of them our adversaries, see the value in our agricultural and we are allowing them to buy up our irreplaceable lands and also take the water resources from American farmers. So shortsighted and so foolish.

We are a new agricultural state. We don't have 200+ years of experience. We need to grow smart, we need to look at what settlers in other states did when they were starting out. We need to really consider what agriculture can provide to this state-now and in the future. We need to guard our good lands. We do have some and we have some people who would work hard to get it to produce our needs. We cannot afford to waste our farmable lands to be made into subdivisions and businesses. Yes, we need both but, we need to be proactive about saving the farmlands for producing our food, our fiber, our farm families, our independence before it is too late. Farms add to a community in so many ways. So many of my neighbors tell me repeatedly how much they love driving by our fields, seeing us work in them, seeing the wild moose and caribou eating in them, watching the sunrise and sunset over them. Tourists have stopped and beckoned me to climb down from my tractor and

talk to them. They are so interested in knowing what we do and how we do it. They don't hear much about Alaskan farms and they love knowing they exist.

I want to see agriculture flourish here in Alaska. I want more people to get involved in living on and loving the land and what it can produce. I want more consumers to have access to healthy, locally grown, animal and people food. I want more respect and consideration given to what farming and ranching can do with a little encouragement. It will never provide the (fast money) of many other endeavors, but it will supply our basic needs and be an ever growing, ever giving addition to our lives if we don't destroy all possibility of farming and ranching forever.

I am not for another government department. I am for common sense. I am for encouragement. I am for training. I am for preserving our farmlands. I am for teaching our young people to love the sometimes hard but always rewarding life they could build on a piece of land of their own. I believe there are ways to accomplish that and more on a local level with local input. Let's look for solutions and plan for a bright future for agriculture in our great state. By doing so, we will be healthier, happier, more self-sufficient and more content.

God Bless our Nation, our state and our citizens.

Priscilla Mott

907 262-2871

Greetings...Senate Resources and Honorable Senator Scott Kawasaki: Comes now when I ask you support and pass SB 128

and HB 140 in recognition of Alaska being established with a Department of Agriculture. Thank you. ... WJo

WJo (Jo Woodward)

Fairbanks, AK 99775.3251

Honorable Members of the Senate Resources Committee,

As members of the Delta Junction agricultural community, we respectfully urge you to support SB 128. Through our efforts over the past 30 years growing hay and livestock we have come to fully realize the need for an Alaska Department of Agriculture with a mission of organizing and developing a reliable and sustainable food industry centered around Alaska sourced products.

There is no doubt about the risk Alaska faces when it comes to food security. We are only one natural disaster, military conflict, or another pandemic away from massive supply chain disruptions. A Department of Agriculture can mitigate the risk we now face in the following ways:

Enhancing Production

By focusing on increasing production of crops and livestock within Alaska so we do not have to spend billions of our dollars to import 95% of what we eat

Integrating Food Production With Storage, Processing, Sales, Transportation, and Distribution

By ensuring producers have access to sufficient storage and processing facilities and advocating for local products to be carried in national chain stores

Making Alaska's Agriculture Industry Strong and Sustainable

By encouraging opportunities for the young farmers who will be the future of our industry

Providing Focus Solely on Agriculture

By giving farmers and ranchers the support and attention they need and deserve

Please put Alaska on par with the 48 other states which have Departments of Agriculture. Help us grow our own future.

Respectfully,
Stephen and Wanda Sorensen

I am writing in support SB 128 and HB 140, creating a Department of Agriculture in Alaska. I recommend this in the interest of a more prominent role of Ag in Alaska governance. As we face the need for a sustainable food supply more independent of long hauls from the lower 48 and beyond, more attention to locally-grown is no longer an option. Ask yourselves, why is it that Alaska is only joined by Rhode Island as the only 2 states without a Department of Agriculture?

Please fix that; pass the legislation to create a Department of Agriculture.

Jon Dufendach, Delta Jct., long-time farmer and member, Alaska Farm Bureau.

We support the formation of a Department of Agriculture.

Eda A Jewett

Rainbow Enterprises

Healy, AK 99743

Our mighty state of Alaska needs to establish a Department of Agriculture and this department needs to focus on agriculture.

Our state needs to grow in food and crop production.

Being under the umbrella of Department of Natural Resources leaves agriculture on the sidelines.

Please support SB 128.

Thank you

Dorothy DeBlauw

Healy, AK

Alaska's agriculture industry is growing, and we have so much potential to do more. We need a Department of Agriculture to more quickly and fully realize the potential of the agriculture industry. Please support Senate Bill 128.

Having a department will bring more focus to the agriculture industry's needs. A cabinet-level position means agriculture will be at the table, proposing budgets and policies to better serve our farmers and ranchers. There will also be more consistency through changing administrations; a department means there will always be a commissioner focused on agriculture. A commissioner brings more clout when dealing with larger markets, other departments and federal agencies. This is an important step to building a strong agriculture industry, which will build a stronger Alaska.

Senate Bill 128 is a great way to improve our food security. We can get a department started and make changes as needed in the future. Supporting agriculture will improve our food security, diversify our economy, and help Alaska become more self-reliant.

Thank you,

Ron & Marji Illingworth

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North Pole, Alaska

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Dear Senators,

It was a disappointment that EO 136 failed in the legislative vote. Agriculture in Alaska is a difficult venture and we need all the support a Department of Ag could provide. As this bill moves forward we farmers would appreciate your support to pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Carol Dufendach

Big D Farms

Delta Junction, Ak 99737

To whom it may concern:

I'm writing as an Alaskan farmer to express my support for more resources towards agriculture in the state, especially for supporting land access and increased agricultural production. That does not, however, necessitate a Department of Agriculture. If establishing a Department doesn't meaningfully support and encourage farmers in Alaska beyond the status quo, is it worth expending the resources? Whatever the Senate decides, I hope it supports young and beginning farmers in establishing new operations and helps existing farmers to stay in business.

Regards,

Sam Knapp

Offbeet Farm

Fairbanks, AK 99709

<https://offbeetalaska.com/>

Pronouns: he, him, his

I am writing to express my opposition to the establishment of the proposed agriculture board. While such boards are often presented as supportive measures for agricultural development, they frequently serve as barriers to farmers rather than allies. At the bottom I have added a very short list of a very long list of harms agriculture departments around the country have caused.

Agriculture boards tend to impose excessive regulatory burdens on farmers, requiring permits, fees, and compliance measures that inhibit rather than promote agricultural activity. Instead of fostering innovation and growth, these boards often prioritize bureaucracy and conservation over the practical needs of farmers, particularly small-scale and independent ones.

I have been told an AG Department would give the farmers a voice. Oddly enough as a resident of Alaska as a voter of Alaska I thought I had a voice I didn't know being a hobby farmer took that away from me. We are a small state where we can speak to our legislatures and it is their jobs to represent us, regardless of what industry we choose to be in.

One particularly alarming aspect of the proposed bill is its provision to criminalize the sale of seeds outside the certified system. This measure effectively limits the ability of farmers and gardeners to exchange seeds freely, concentrating power in the hands of certified seed sellers and their certifiers. Such restrictions undermine the biodiversity and resilience of farming communities and favor special family or friends interest that's definitely a favor to someone. It puts that special favor over those of independent farmers and gardeners, and because you know we have such a rampant problem with people selling seeds to each other from their favorite plants that are Alaska proven we need to turn them into criminals right. If you had been talking about some kind of drug seeds I could understand this but you're not. You're talking about the Crabapple seeds from proven crabapple tree root stock in somebody's yard! What the fuck is wrong with you people.

Far from advancing agriculture, the creation of this board appears to prioritize control and compliance and conservation over empowerment of farmers in Alaska. The EO starts with criminalizing seed sellers! That runs counter to the ideals of agricultural freedom and sustainability.

If you want to do something good for farmers shut up and listen don't demand that we speak through a middle man to you, that's honestly just disgusting. You want to help farmers create a farmer's Bill of Rights. I know the tree huggers are worried that Alaska is going to end out with 50,000 Farmers up here tilling up all the land, with our short growing season that's not going to happen, even if we got a thousand massively huge farms tomorrow massively huge ones like big enough to export foods the environmental damage it would do would be so minimal it wouldn't even be noticed. So drop the conservation crap with farming cuz up here it just doesn't really apply.

VOTE DOWN THIS ATROCITY and prioritize the VOICES and needs of farmers who rely on the ability to work independently. Focus on listening to what your constituents even if they are farmers. Because the last thing that farmers need or for that matter any of your constituents need is a middleman the bureaucracy between us and our Representatives. That's all it is it is a middle man between us and the representatives and maybe you're tired of speaking with your constituents and if that is the case get out office. But don't tell me I have to talk to a middle man to have my voice heard.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I hope you will consider the concerns of farmers like myself who are deeply invested in preserving agricultural freedom and independence.

Here is a list of some of the harms that the Department of Agriculture has caused farmers! This is a very tiny list of that clear history

California, New York, Massachusetts, Texas, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania**: Require a veterinarian's prescription for deworming medications and other treatments.

2. **California**: Pesticide regulations are too restrictive and costly, impacting pest management.

3. **Florida**: Nutrient management regulations hinder crop production.

4. **Louisiana**: Timber harvesting regulations make it difficult for small timber farmers to operate profitably.

5. **North Carolina**: Hog farming regulations are burdensome and costly.

6. **Colorado, Maryland, Virginia**: Allow veterinarians to dispense compounded medications without a patient-specific prescription under certain conditions.

7. **Texas**: Water usage regulations for irrigation are too restrictive, especially during droughts.

8. **Ohio**: Nutrient management regulations are burdensome and costly.

9. **Michigan**: Dairy farming regulations are too restrictive, impacting small dairy farmers.

10. **New Jersey**: Weakened Right-to-Farm laws reduce protections against nuisance lawsuits, impacting crop planting.

This is just a few.

If you are interested in what your constituents have to say some of them happen to be farmers some of them hobby farmers some of them Farmers market farmers some of them just big gardeners, but if our voices matter and you really want to help a farmers, or if you just actually want to ensure food Security in Alaska this is how you do it. It's not that AG EO This is how you do it!

****Alaska Farmer's Rights and Property Protection Act****

****Section 1: Short Title****

This Act shall be known as the "Alaska Farmer's Rights and Property Protection Act."

****Section 2: Purpose****

The purpose of this Act is to:

1. Safeguard the rights of Alaska's farmers to manage and operate their farms without undue interference.
2. Ensure farming activities, essential to Alaska's food security and economy, remain free from unnecessary regulation.
3. Acknowledge Alaska's unique agricultural environment, where farming poses minimal environmental risk even with significant growth, and prioritize farmers' rights above environmental considerations.

****Section 3: Definitions****

1. ***Farmer***: Any individual, family, or organization engaged in cultivating crops (including vegetables, fruits, berries, and trees) or raising livestock of any kind, for personal or commercial use.
2. ***Farming Property***: Any land used for agricultural purposes, including food gardening, livestock raising, berry cultivation, and related activities.
3. ***Right to Farm***: The fundamental right of farmers to engage in lawful agricultural practices free from interference by environmental regulations, zoning ordinances, or nuisance complaints.
4. ***Undue Burden***: Any cost or restriction imposed on farming operations that exceeds \$1 or does not provide a demonstrable and direct benefit to the individual farmer.
5. ***Agricultural Land***: All private land in Alaska shall be classified as agricultural land if fewer than 10 full-time, year-round residential homes exist within a quarter-mile radius.

****Section 4: Affirmation of the Right to Farm****

(a) ****Farming Supremacy****: Agricultural operations in Alaska shall take precedence over environmental laws, zoning ordinances, and other regulations. Farmers retain full authority to manage their land and activities without interference.

(b) ****Environmental Exemption****: Farmers are exempt from environmental regulations unless such regulations are explicitly proven necessary to protect public health, supported by transparent and demonstrable evidence. Consumer choice to purchase directly from farmers shall not be restricted by regulatory measures.

(c) ****Designation of Agricultural Land****:

1. All private land in the State of Alaska shall be classified as agricultural land if fewer than 10 full-time, year-round residential homes exist within a quarter-mile radius.
2. Such land shall be protected under this Act, with agricultural activities given priority and immunity from zoning restrictions or reclassification efforts.

(d) ****Zoning Protections****:

1. This Act shall apply in all areas within the State of Alaska where there are fewer than 10 full-time, year-round residential homes within a half-mile radius of the farming property.

2. Farms that were established prior to nearby residential development or construction of homes shall retain full protections under this Act, regardless of subsequent population density or urban expansion in the area.

3. In the event of disputes involving zoning or land use, priority shall be given to farmers' rights under this Act, with courts required to recognize the precedence of agricultural operations over local development.

(e) ****Nuisance Protections****: Lawful farming operations, including those involving noise, odor, and other natural byproducts, are protected from nuisance complaints when:

1. The farming property operates in areas that meet the conditions outlined in subsections (c) and (d).
2. The farming property existed prior to the establishment of nearby residential developments.

****Section 5: Tax Exemptions for Farming Properties and Activities****

(a) ****Property Tax Exemption****:

1. All property used for farming, including small-scale and large-scale operations, shall be exempt from property taxes.
2. All buildings or structures used for housing livestock, equipment, or agricultural supplies shall also be tax-exempt.

(b) ****Sales Tax Exemption****:

1. Farmers shall be exempt from sales tax on all goods sold directly to consumers, whether through farmers' markets, home-based sales, or other venues.
2. Tax exemptions apply to fresh produce, livestock, eggs, honey, and other farm-derived products.

(c) ****Farm Worker Housing Tax Exemption****: Housing provided for farm workers on farming property shall be exempt from property taxes.

****Section 6: Minimal Environmental Impact Recognition****

(a) No farming operations in Alaska shall be classified as environmentally harmful, regardless of pesticide use, fertilizer application, or livestock maintenance.

(b) Environmental restrictions aimed at mitigating harm shall not apply to agricultural activities in Alaska, given their inherently low impact.

****Section 7: Livestock and Small-Scale Farming Protections****

(a) Farmers shall face no restrictions on the type, quantity, or purpose of livestock, whether for personal or commercial purposes.

(b) Small-scale farming, including personal gardens, berry cultivation, and micro-livestock operations, shall receive the same protections as larger enterprises.

****Section 8: Irrigation and Water Management Rights****

(a) ****Autonomy in Irrigation****: Farmers shall maintain full autonomy over the irrigation methods and systems used on their farming property, without interference from state or local regulations.

(b) ****Surface Water Rights****: Farmers have the inherent right to access and utilize surface water located exclusively on their property for agricultural purposes, including irrigation, livestock hydration, and crop management.

(c) ****Water Drainage and Retention****: Farmers are granted the right to drain water from their land by any means necessary to ensure proper land management and agricultural productivity, provided such actions do not result in the flooding or damage of neighboring properties. This includes the construction of drainage systems, culverts, or ditches.

(d) ****Pond Construction****: Farmers are authorized to construct and maintain ponds or other water retention systems on their property for the purposes of irrigation, livestock needs, aquaculture, or other agricultural uses, free from permitting requirements or regulatory oversight.

(e) ****Exemption from Fees and Permits****: Farmers shall not be subject to any fees, permits, or restrictions related to the use, diversion, storage, or management of water located on their property for agricultural purposes.

****Section 9: Building Restrictions and Permitting Protections****

(a) ****Exemption from Building Restrictions****: Farmers shall face no restrictions on the construction, modification, or use of buildings or structures directly related to agricultural operations.

(b) ****Exemption from Permitting Fees****: Farmers shall not be required to pay permitting fees or obtain special approvals for any building used for farming purposes, including barns, equipment sheds, greenhouses, and livestock housing.

(c) ****Independence in Farm Infrastructure****: Farmers shall maintain complete autonomy over the design, construction, and placement of structures used in their operations, free from interference by state or local regulations.

****Section 10: State Support for Farming Communities****

(a) ****Fair and Open State Assistance****: If the State of Alaska provides farming grants, subsidies, or other financial support, such programs shall:

1. Be awarded via a fair lottery system without unnecessary restrictions.
2. Impose no obligations requiring the farmer to cede property rights, conform to environmental conditions, or provide the state with interest in farming operations.

****Section 11: Eminent Domain Protections****

(a) In cases where agricultural property is selected for an eminent domain taking, the property owner shall be entitled to receive the ****greater of the following****:

1. Fair market value of the property, assessed at the time of the taking.
2. Full replacement value of the property, including the cost to acquire comparable farmland and rebuild any structures or infrastructure necessary for farming operations.

(b) Property owners may challenge the valuation of their land in court, with courts required to prioritize the protection of agricultural operations under this Act.

****Section 12: Supremacy of Private Property Rights****

(a) Farmers' private property rights shall take precedence over state initiatives, including conservation, environmental, or wildlife protection efforts, except where compelling evidence demonstrates an immediate and unavoidable public health risk.

(b) No state agency, including the Department of Fish and Game, may regulate, restrict, or study privately-owned agricultural land without explicit, written consent from the property owner, except in emergencies involving direct threats to human life.

(c) Farmers shall not be required to modify their operations, property, or infrastructure to accommodate state-led initiatives for wildlife conservation or environmental purposes.

(d) In cases where state actions impose operational or financial burdens on farmers, the state shall compensate the property owner for the full extent of such burdens.

****Section 13: Dispute Resolution Mechanism****

(a) An independent Agricultural Rights Review Board shall be established to mediate and resolve disputes between farmers and state agencies.

1. The board shall prioritize the protection of private property rights in all decisions.

2. State actions that interfere with farming operations shall be suspended until the board issues a resolution.

3. Farmers may appeal board decisions in court, with courts required to prioritize the supremacy of private property rights under this Act.

****Section 14: Additional Protections Against State Overreach****

(a) ****Easements and Access****: No state agency or utility shall establish new easements or rights-of-way across farming property without written consent from the farmer. Any such agreement must compensate the farmer at full replacement value, loss of value, or fair market value.

(b) ****State Wetland and Waterway Protections****:

1. State wetland protections shall not apply to privately owned farmland under any circumstances, ensuring farmers' complete freedom to manage their land for agricultural purposes.

2. Any land designated as wetlands that is sold or transferred into the private market shall immediately lose its state wetland protection status upon the transfer of ownership.

****Section 15: Livestock Veterinary Care Rights****

(a) Farmers shall have the unrestricted right to perform their own veterinary care and medical treatments on their livestock, as they deem necessary, without interference from state or local regulations.

(b) Farmers may utilize traditional, modern, or alternative methods of treatment for the health and well-being of their animals, based on their experience, knowledge, and judgment.

(c) No state agency or regulatory body shall impose licensing requirements, oversight, or restrictions on farmers conducting veterinary care for their own livestock.

(d) Farmers shall not be required to use state-licensed veterinarians unless they voluntarily choose to seek professional services

Carrie Harris

I ask the senate to decline Dunleavy's "department of agriculture".

It is too much government.

Laurenc L. DeVita

Sweet Root Farm

Homer AK



RE: Support for SB 128 / HB 140 Department of Agriculture

March 26, 2025

Dear Chair Giessel and Members of the Senate Resources Committee,

The Alaska Food Strategy Task Force wishes to express our strong support for Senate Bill 128 and House Bill 140. The establishment of a standalone Department of Agriculture in Alaska has been our number one recommendation of the thirty-seven recommendations we have issued throughout our 2023 to 2025 deliberations.

We recognize this initiative's importance in strengthening food security across the state and growing our agriculture industry. We urge your favorable consideration and support of this legislation.

Alaska's unique geography and climate demand a focused approach to agriculture, one that is currently constrained by its placement within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). While DNR has served as a steward for many of our state's resources, agriculture requires dedicated leadership to fully realize its potential. A Department of Agriculture, with a commissioner seated at the governor's cabinet table, would empower our farmers and ranchers and elevate the priority of food production in Alaska. With this level of leadership, the department would address issues like soil conservation, pest management, and the promotion of local production and marketing; tackle challenges and overcome obstacles related to land and transportation logistics that ag producers regularly face; and disseminate new research and best practices specific for our northern region to our hardworking farmers and ranchers.

Presently, Alaska imports food to the tune of nearly \$3 billion per year and exports very, very little in ag products. In comparison, Scandinavia (which is at the same latitude as our state) exports more than \$10 billion in ag products. Not only can we reach new markets for ag products grown in our pristine environment and unadulterated, rich soils, but we can and must shore up our resilience for our residents in the event of a supply chain disruption. Alaska is particularly vulnerable due to our being the final link in the North America / West Coast supply chain. It is critical that we increase food security; the department shepherding all the parts and pieces to make that happen – that private ag producers cannot do individually – is the right next step.

To this last point, we would like to refer you to our 2024 white paper entitled, *Why a Department of Agriculture Makes Sense for Alaska*, subtitled *The Lack of Food Security in Alaska: Tackling It Head-on*, for insights on the five reasons the creation of a department is the best next step:

- Reason #1 Consolidation and efficiencies to better serve industry
- Reason #2 Cabinet-level and legislative focus
- Reason #3 Economic diversification
- Reason #4 Health and vitality of Alaska communities
- Reason #5 Proven success in other states

If a Division of Agriculture were sufficient, as a state we would have already realized the goals of a robust private sector agriculture industry, the growth of food production, increased food security, and the reduction of food dependence from outside sources. Because we have not reached these goals, we firmly believe the creation of the Department of Agriculture is the necessary next step to achieve them. We wholeheartedly support this legislation encompassing the visionary framework and request that you move it through the committee process and onto the floor for passage.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shelley Hughes".

Senator Shelley Hughes
Chair, Alaska Food Strategy Task Force

**Please note that support for SB 128 and HB 140 does not necessarily indicate support by organizations that individual Executive Board members may represent.*