

March 13, 2018
Alaska State Capitol Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: HB233 and SB116

Dear Representatives Seaton and Foster and Senators MacKinnon and Hoffman,

I am an Alaskan resident and I reside in Homer. I am writing to express my support of HB233 and SB116; two companion legislative measures to extend Alaska's Education Tax Credit program. I support these pieces of legislation as currently written. The Education Tax Credit program is a mutually beneficial partnership for private industry, educational institutions, Alaskan communities, and the Legislature.

Alaska's Education Tax Credit program was first established in 1987 by the Legislature to encourage private businesses to make charitable contributions to support schools in Alaska. The program's effects have gone far beyond benefits to the educational institutions receiving funding; the program has had positive impacts on urban, rural, and tribal communities, on workforce development, on federal and state agencies, and on the business climate in Alaska.

As a Master's student in the Environmental Science program at Alaska Pacific University I have directly benefited from Education Tax Credit funding through tuition, stipend and support for supplies, laboratory analyses, fieldwork. Prior to graduate school, I spent several summers as a technician on salmon projects on the Anchor and Ninilchik Rivers. Support from the Education Tax Credit program has allowed me to return to graduate school and develop a research project that directly addresses age and length compositions of returning adult Chinook salmon in Cook Inlet and Yukon River stocks. The project is being conducted in collaboration with the AK Dept. of Fish & Game and uses existing time series of age-sex-length composition data to estimate the influence of a suite of marine covariates on growth and maturation. I expect that this educational opportunity will allow me to expand my work capacity and provide increased support to the community of Homer and other Lower Cook Inlet communities.

Without these funds, such applied educational opportunities, and the consequent benefits to Alaskan communities, would be financially prohibitive and unavailable to students.

These contributions and benefits also assist the legislature by reducing the amount of fiscal appropriations that may be needed to support educational institutions and academic programs and natural resource management agencies in our State.

The Education Tax Credit program is a win-win for the educational institutions, children, communities, and businesses in Alaska and it is critically important that we extend this program. The current program is due to sunset on December 31, 2018; HB233 and SB116 will extend it through January 1, 2025.

I respectfully request that you support HB233 and SB116 as currently written by passing these bills in this legislative session. The Education Tax Credit program has helped many young Alaskans prepare for life and their future in the job market, while at the same time providing our State with a stable, qualified and well-prepared work force. Research and education in Alaskan fisheries, marine biology, and environmental science programs are critical to maintaining a healthy state economy.

If you have any questions or require anything additional from me, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
Holly Smith