

Dear Senator Costello,

I am writing concerning the Alaska Film Production Tax Credit Program. Please accept my comments in favor of the program and encouragement to keep the program intact.

Of course, we Alaskans, understand the difficult fiscal situation the State of Alaska faces. That is why programs like the Film Production Tax Credit are so important. This is an opportunity to provide jobs, income, and revenue to many Alaskans across many different sectors and industries.

My husband and I run a charter business and cafe in Whittier Alaska. Over the years we have had several opportunities to work with film projects of all sizes (commercials, reality programs, and feature film productions). Much of the work has come during the winter and early spring before our normal seasonal operation begins. That means I make payroll in months there would normally be no payroll, I pay City taxes in months when there would normally be no tax revenue, I order goods and services for our operation in months there would not normally be need. To our small business this may equal business in the “thousands” of dollars. But to our employees that means making rent, maybe eating out at a local restaurant, or buying a new pair of shoes – in other words, commerce.

Our vessel was used in one episode of “Alaska the Last Frontier.” We have received numerous reservations after seeing our unique landing craft vessel on the program and still today, after two years, field calls about that program. We took some of the cast from Frozen Ground on a sightseeing cruise and received a listing in the credits. I didn’t even realize we were in the credits until I received an inquiry letting me know they saw our company listed.

I understand the philosophical differences of the tax incentive – Is it good for State Government or is it good for the State. I believe there is no denying that millions of dollars coming into the State and being spread across many different sectors – is very good for the State.

In a time when oil revenue and jobs are questionable, it is responsible and prudent to look for ways to diversify our economy. The film industry offers those opportunities. I would also like to point out the marketing value the film industry offers Alaska, show casing our State for future tourism.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Kelly Bender

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