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Alaska State Legislature

House District 3

Upper Mendenhall Valley

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Member
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Sponsor Statement House Bill 345 Version B March 7, 2024

"An Act relating to safety ladders at municipal harbor facilities; relating to the harbor facility grant fund; and providing for an effective date."

House Bill 345 would promote water safety in our communities by mandating the installation of safety ladders on municipal floating docks receiving a harbor facility grant. Installation of safety ladders would reduce the risk of death by drowning for people using these busy docks.

Municipal docks are largely used by Alaskans for access to fishing for personal use and commercial purposes, such as commercial and sport fishing, tourism and delivery of cargo. They are also heavily used for subsistence and recreational fishing and boating. Given the necessity and popularity of Alaska's harbor floating docks, it is not surprising that accidents happen.

When a person falls in the water next to a floating dock, it can be difficult to get back onto the dock. Without a ladder, it is next to impossible. Wave action, heavy clothes, hypothermia and nothing but piers to grab onto can result in drowning.

Safety ladders are easy to install, inexpensive, and are paid for by the municipality receiving the harbor improvement grant. Alaska has the highest rate of drowning deaths in the nation. To make access to deeper water safer, installing safety ladders at municipal docks just makes sense.

I urge support of this bill.