

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 14, 2019

1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Louise Stutes, Co-Chair
Representative Adam Wool, Co-Chair
Representative Matt Claman
Representative Harriet Drummond
Representative Andi Story
Representative Dave Talerico

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Sara Rasmussen

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

PUBLIC TESTIMONY CONTINUED FROM 3/12/19

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 36

"An Act repealing an exemption for containing or confining loads being transported on highways; and providing for an effective date."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

SANDRA HICKS

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

TIMOTHY LINDOFF

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

ELLIE HOBLET

False Pass, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

JOHN MURPHY

False Pass, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MAKENA SANDELL

False Pass, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified against reduced service on the Alaska Marine Highway System.

RYLEE MULKEY

False Pass, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on the importance of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

BRIANA SCHILLING

Wrangell, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

LUANN MCVEY

Douglas, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of continued funding for the Alaska Marine Highway System.

KIRSA HUGHES-SKANDIJS

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

ALICIA HUGHES-SKANDIJS

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

FATHER FRANK REITTER

Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

CHRIS BERN

Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

JOE MACINKO
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Urged the legislature to submit a veto-proof budget.

KATHY PEAVEY
Craig, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MARY THOLE
Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

TONY GREGORIO
Chignik Lagoon, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

ROSETTA PRING
Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

LENNON JENNINGS
Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

ROYCE BORST
Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

AYDEN FLORES
Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

EZEKIEL COUGHRAN
Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

ELIZABETH BACOM

Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MARILYN MENISH-MEUCCI

Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

CATHY RENFELDT, Executive Director

Cordova Chamber of Commerce

Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

DAVID OTNESS

Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

GEORGE REIFENSTEIN

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Alaskans For Alaska

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

CALVIN WILSON, JR.

Organized Village of Kake

Kake, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

DONALD WESTLUND

Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

CAMILLA GAINÉ

Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MJ CADLE

Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

BETH SHORT-RHOADS

Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

ROBERT NIELSEN

Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

FAITH LEE

Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

CHANDLER O'CONNELL

Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MELISSA CULLUM

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

COLTON WELCH

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

JANICE LEVY

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to cuts to the Alaska Marine Highway System.

HEATHER PETERSON

Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

PAT JACOBSEN

Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MARY FORBES

Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

SHAWN DOCHTERMANN

Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MATT MOIR

North Pacific Seafoods

Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

JOSH COUGHRAN, Superintendent

Skagway School District

Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

PAIGE ROSS

Kake, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

JACKIE MULLER

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to proposed cuts and/or privatization of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

PAUL NELSON

Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to proposed cuts to the Alaska Marine Highway System.

TONY TENGS

Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

PENELOPE OSWALT
Cordova, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

BECKY CHAPEK
Cordova, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

DEBRA ADAMS
Cordova, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MARY DAHLE
Ketchikan, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

ERIC WALLEN
Ketchikan, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Alaska Marine Highway System.

GLENN WADE
Ketchikan, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

KRIS BENSON
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

JAYNE ANDREEN
Douglas, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Alaska Marine Highway System.

BOB SYLVESTER
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

STAN HJORT

Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

GAYLE NICHOLSON TRIVETTE

Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

JOHN KISER

Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MICHAEL MICKELSON

Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

KAY GUYMON

Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

SUSAN WALSH

Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MIKE SALLEE

Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

TRINA ARNOLD, Regional Director

Juneau Office

Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System on behalf of 400 crewmembers currently on AMHS vessels.

JAMES FOSTER

Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

JEFF KASPER, Southeast Regional Manager
Alaska Public Employees Association
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

JUSTIN PARISH
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

DAN EGOLF
Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

PATRICK PHILPOTT
Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

JAN WRENTMORE, President
Skagway Marine Access Commission
Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

SETH HOWARD
Anchorage, Anchorage

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

PAT PALKOVIC
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

FRED STURMAN
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of cuts to the state budget and the distribution of those cuts throughout the state.

MIKE MCCARTHY
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

POPPY BENSON
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

BECKY WORKMAN
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

JAN TROJAN
Craig, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System on behalf of herself and others from Prince of Wales Island.

LACY FOSMORE
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

SARAH ROARK
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

CHRISTINE NIEMI
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

BRIAN MCCARTHY
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

NOLA LAMKEN
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

BOB CRUISE
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

ELLIE CULLUM

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

ANN FOSTER DOMBKOWSKI

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

FRANK LEE

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

HEATHER LENDE, Assembly Member

Haines Borough Assembly

Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

CATHRYN COATS

Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MARGIE DEMMERT

Angoon, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

LAURA STEELE

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

RICHARD COOK

Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

SHAWNA WILLIAMS-BUCHANAN

Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

GEORGE DALTON, JR.

Hoonah, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

KRISTIN MAHLEN
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

MARCELO QUINTO, President
Camp 70
Alaska Native Brotherhood
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:30:00 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LOUISE STUTES called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Representatives Drummond, Talerico, Story, and Stutes were present at the call to order. Representatives Wool and Claman arrived as the meeting was in progress.

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY SYSTEM: PUBLIC TESTIMONY **Continued from 3/12/19**

[1:30:44 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STUTES announced that the only order of business would be a hearing on the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS). She explained that the scheduled hearing for HB 36 was postponed to allow for additional public testimony on AMHS. She noted that the usual committee aide is not present, as she is currently on a ferry and interviewing riders about the importance of AMHS.

CO-CHAIR STUTES recognized that the record for number of public testifiers was broken during the two preceding AMHS hearings. She thanked members of the public for their participation. "Our ferries are important to us," she stated, "and you are making that very clear." She said the public participation sends a loud and clear message to the administration of Governor Michael J. Dunleavy that AMHS is every bit as critical to Alaskans as land highways.

CO-CHAIR STUTES noted that public testimony would be limited to one minute to allow everyone the opportunity to speak.

1:32:56 PM

SANDRA HICKS relayed that she began riding AMHS ferries in 1974 when she lived on Annette Island with the United States Coast Guard (USCG). She described the "wonderful" occasion of the first ferry coming to Metlakatla. She shared that she continued to ride the ferries after moving to Sitka and Juneau. She expressed disappointment that some committee members are not in attendance. She observed that those members represent non-coastal [communities]. She stressed that those members are the ones who "need to hear it most." She noted that she is wearing green and orange for luck in anticipation of St. Patrick's Day and commented that she hopes the state budget will not be "an April Fool's budget" for AMHS. She remarked that legislators' cars are carried to Juneau every year on AMHS ferries at no cost to them. She thanked the committee for hearing additional testimony. She concluded, "It's not only our lifeline; it's our bloodline." She characterized AMHS as the lifeline and bloodline of coastal communities and said those communities would die without it.

1:34:30 PM

TIMOTHY LINDOFF spoke some words in Tlingit, which he called the language of his grandfather. He said the following in English:

Our grandparents ... did, in the past, to work with the state. When Bill Egan was first governor, we brought the first ferries in Southeast Alaska to Hoonah. I was a fairly young man; I was so excited ... [knowing] that I was able to work on there.

MR. LINDOFF thanked the people present. He shared that he had a stroke in 2009 and was "fortunate enough to come through." He thanked "all the great people that are testifying" and emphasized the importance of [the ferries]. He said, "thank you" in Tlingit and expressed appreciation to "each one of you."

1:36:56 PM

ELLIE HOBLET informed the committee that she is a third-grade student from False Pass, Alaska. She listed the reasons the ferry is important to her community, as follows:

If the ferry goes away, then the population of False Pass will get lower because of the difficulties. In some communities that is the only way they can get in and out of town. Another reason we need to keep the ferry running is because when the plane has something wrong with it then the ferry can come and pick people up. But I think the most important thing is that it brings people together from different communities close by, because we need to see family. For me, these are really important reasons why we need the ferry. Please have Alaska keep the ferry. It is important to me and Alaska.

[1:38:17 PM](#)

JOHN MURPHY relayed that he attends to False Pass School. He said, "We need the ferry to move people into False Pass." He explained that the ferry is important because visitors come to the region and "buy things." He said the ferry is important to those who live in Alaska. During summer, the ferry brings people from all over the world to False Pass, "and some might like to stay." He said the population of False Pass is 150, and that number would diminish without the ferry. He noted that a lower population is bad for False Pass and could result in residents losing their school.

[1:39:56 PM](#)

MAKENA SANDELL identified herself as a high school student at False Pass School. She said the State of Alaska (SOA) should not reduce ferry service because it is an important means of transportation that is more affordable than flying. She noted that planes bring mail to False Pass, but not many passengers because the cost is prohibitive. She added that the ferries transport bicycles, kayaks, and motor vehicles to False Pass. She questioned how False Pass residents would be able to replace their vehicles without ferry service. She said False Pass School holds fundraisers for school equipment and school trips. She explained that much of that money is raised during "Ferry Friday," during which students sell jewelry, glass balls, and baked goods to tourists on the ferry. She noted that many community members earn extra income from tourists who would likely not visit the Aleutian Islands without the ferries, as airfare is expensive. She asked the committee to ensure [ferries run] in the future.

[1:41:32 PM](#)

RYLEE MULKEY said he would like to inform legislators about the importance of the ferries. He said they allow people to travel from Cold Bay to False Pass to visit family and friends. He remarked that the ferries are important drivers of income and referenced the bake sale fundraisers for school field trips. He expressed hope that this income source does not close. Mr. Mulkey said that without the ferry, people may not be able to experience the beauty of the Aleutians, such as seeing a bear with cubs, a pod of whales, or even "some porpoises passing by."

[1:42:35 PM](#)

BRIANA SCHILLING testified in support of AMHS. She identified herself as a 24-year-old resident of Wrangell, Alaska, with a four-month-old son. She explained that her child was born in Juneau, as no one in her small town delivers babies. She said all pregnant women who live on Wrangell Island must leave it to give birth. She noted that this is true of many small communities in the state. She credited AMHS for its ability to transport her, her family, and her vehicle to Juneau, where she spent a month waiting for her son to be born. She said this method was "simple, reliable, and cost-effective." She noted that it would not have been possible through Alaska Airlines, which provides the only other means of transportation off Wrangell Island. She stated that she returned to Wrangell via AMHS when her son was a week old. Ms. Schilling remarked, "I, as well as many others, rely on the ferry system. It is our vital method of transportation. It is our highway, and we depend on it." She thanked the committee for listening.

[1:43:45 PM](#)

LUANN MCVEY asked the committee to preserve funding to support AMHS. She continued:

To balance the state's budget, we need to stop paying the oil companies to take our oil, cap or stop [permanent fund dividend] (PFD) payments, and institute an income tax.

Yes, the ferries are subsidized. According to a March 2016 study by the McDowell Group, in 2014, the state spent \$117 million on the ferries, with a net economic benefit of \$273 million, thus Alaska gets a 133 percent return on its investment in the marine highways.

MS. MCVEY said since coming to Alaska in 1957, three generations of her family have been able to explore Alaska and visit other towns for work, school, and recreation. She emphasized, "The ferries are not a frivolous expense for those of us who live here in places that are not connected to roads. They are our roads."

[1:44:59 PM](#)

KIRSA HUGHES-SKANDIJS relayed some of the challenges that face people who need to move their households into and out of Alaska. She noted that some of these people are military service members. She remarked that, if any member of those families has a history of driving under the influence (DUI), then driving through Canada is not an option. She noted that air transportation can be prohibitively expensive, especially with a large amount of cargo to move. She said AMHS is not only the indubitable lifeblood of the coastal communities, but it is also the only way - except by air - that people can enter or leave the state without leaving the country. She mused that this point has been overlooked by "people in the Interior and the Mat-Su."

[1:46:05 PM](#)

ALICIA HUGHES-SKANDIJS quoted Governor Michael J. Dunleavy, as follows:

I don't envision at any time that there would not be a functional and robust ferry service in Southeast, the panhandle of Alaska.

MS. A. HUGHES-SKANDIJS said she too cannot envision such a thing because AMHS and its ferries are vital to Southeast Alaska's economy and community, as well as the health and safety of its residents. She said cuts to AMHS would affect not just Southeast Alaska, but other coastal communities too. She said AMHS is also vital to the state economy, culture, and way of life, as well as the health of residents across the state. She stated, "The ferries are our road system." She said she cannot imagine "any way to go forward if you shut down a road system in any other part of the state." She emphasized her opposition to the proposed cuts to AMHS and urged [the legislature] to fully fund it.

[1:47:25 PM](#)

FATHER FRANK REITTER identified himself as the pastor at St. Mary's Catholic Parish in Kodiak and noted that he was previously a pastor in Valdez, Cordova, Dutch Harbor, and Unalaska. He stated that he is testifying on behalf of himself. He noted that 288 people testified during a previous hearing on Tuesday, March 12, 2019. He said this indicates the "dire straits" costal Alaskans would find themselves in should proposed cuts to AMHS be enacted. He said the testifiers have made the reasons [for preserving the ferry system] and the impact [of not doing so] abundantly clear. He continued:

The Coast Guard, the State Police, and local agencies spend millions of dollars to prepare to be, and then to be, a lifeline to save one individual. No one asks if it's cost-effective. Roads are the lifeline of communities. There would be a radically different Alyeska without the Seward Highway; a radically different Wasilla or Talkeetna without the Parks Highway; a radically different Alaska without the [Alaska-Canadian Highway] (ALCAN). People in coastal communities are some of the most hard-working, creative, and iconic Alaskans. Please keep the same lifeline their landed brethren have. Thank you.

[1:48:42 PM](#)

CHRIS BERN identified himself as a six-year resident of Kodiak representing himself. He remarked, "You do not realize what you have until it's gone." He recalled what Kodiak Island was like in the early 1960s before the Motor Vessel (M/V) Tustumena began service. He said, "Back then it was funded by tickets sales and a state income tax - that was all pre-oil." He recalled [riding the ferry] to go to sports tournaments a couple times a year. He opined, "There was a need then and there is now." He advocated against closing AMHS and characterized the idea as "poor thinking." He argued that the ferry system worked in the late 1960s and should be able to do so now. He noted that a new ferry dock was constructed on Kodiak Island at a cost of millions of dollars, so to "mothball all that stuff" does not make sense.

[1:49:52 PM](#)

JOE MACINKO identified himself as a 45-year resident [of Kodiak] and a previous resident of Sand Point, Alaska. He said he supports the ferry but argued that it does not matter how much

heartfelt testimony is given; the ferry will be lost unless the House of Representatives and Senate produce a "veto-proof budget" to circumvent Governor Dunleavy's line-item veto power. He opined that the governor has already shown he does not care for rural Alaska. He restated his message for the House of Representatives and Senate to ensure the budget is veto-proof before it is submitted.

[1:50:47 PM](#)

KATHY PEAVEY testified that she fully supports "keeping the Alaska Marine Highway operation [sic]." She commented that AMHS employs many people she knows, and "those workers are the healthy lifelines of our communities." She noted she also supports the Inter-Island Ferry Authority. She described times she has relied upon AMHS, including an instance when she needed to transport her vehicle for repair to Bellingham, Washington, as the job could not be done in Alaska. She stated that she has used AMHS for over 30 years to travel up and down the coast of Alaska and to Canada and Washington. She voiced support for AMHS workers.

[1:51:51 PM](#)

MARY THOLE said she supports AMHS and shared that AMHS has been a lifeline for her family in transporting them for medical care. She said the ferry also provides access to home-building resources and affordable groceries in Juneau, as well as to Juneau International Airport. Without this access, she said, Skagway residents would have to drive to Canada to shop. She stated that residents of Skagway need to be able to access affordable health care via affordable, reliable transportation. She said the ferries are a consistent means of travel to access advanced health care. She noted that AMHS ferries are the primary means by which local students travel to leadership conferences and competitions for sports, robotics, and drama, debate, and forensics. She stated, "The ferry connects our school districts in a way that students in Anchorage visit their rival schools by the bus system." She said airline travel is far too expensive for [such travel].

[1:53:13 PM](#)

TONY GREGORIO, testifying from Chignik Lagoon, Alaska, stated that the ferry system is vital to his community. He explained that air freight costs are very expensive. He indicated that the recent fishing season was "the worst season we've ever had."

He noted that elderly people in his community depend on the ferry to travel to and from Anchorage because they cannot afford to fly. He noted that salmon fishing is virtually the only source of income in the community. He concluded, "If we have to take my PFD, take it. I mean, we need this ferry system."

1:54:40 PM

ROSETTA PRING told the committee that she is a sixth grader from Skagway who is representing herself. She asked committee members to imagine that one of their family members had a terrible illness and "you couldn't go and help them." She said this could happen to everyone who depends on AMHS if it were to shut down. She asked, "Do you really want that to happen to the state?" She opined that the ferry is a gateway to the world outside Skagway; it is needed for "sports, family vacations, and emergency getaways." She said the ferry "means a lot to different people in different ways," including family issues thousands of miles away and "a luxury vacation that we're missing out on." Ms. Pring said she has begun playing basketball and has not been able to travel [with her team] once. She said that's not fair. She noted that the cost of air travel is high, so ferries are the only affordable means of transportation available.

1:55:59 PM

LENNON JENNINGS, a fifth grader at Skagway City School, asked that AMHS be funded. He argued that many people would be forced out of Southeast Alaska if the ferry system went unfunded, as people would not want to live in places without reliable transportation like Skagway. He relayed how his teacher was able to ride a ferry during poor weather to visit a dying relative, something that would not have been possible without AMHS. He said it would be heartbreaking if someone were unable to visit a dying family member because there was no ferry service. He noted that school sports would be affected by the ferry not running, as students would be unable to travel to other communities to play other teams. Mr. Jennings described riding the ferry with friends as "the best thing ever."

1:57:06 PM

ROYCE BORST, a fifth grader from Skagway, stated that school activities depend on AMHS service. He relayed the disappointment he felt when a basketball tournament was canceled. He urged the legislature not to "cancel the ferry."

Mr. Borst said he and his family travel by ferry to catch a flight in Juneau when they want to visit family members in Wisconsin. He said his family would no longer be able to do this if ferry service is canceled, because flights are expensive, and airplanes cannot fly out of Skagway when the weather is inclement.

[1:57:53 PM](#)

AYDEN FLORES, a fifth grader, testified in support of keeping the ferry. He said the ferry is needed by families for vacations and by the school for transportation to events related to robotics, track, and basketball. He said those trips would likely not be possible without ferries. He relayed that the weather in Skagway results in a high likelihood of canceled flights. Mr. Flores said it would be impossible for his parents to make essential work trips - including to other states - without AMHS. He also spoke to the role ferries play in helping people visit sick relatives outside of Skagway, noting that his grandmother lives far away and is a smoker.

[1:59:13 PM](#)

EZEKIEL COUGHRAN named two reasons why the ferries are important: For visiting sick/dying relatives and for attending sports competitions. He relayed that he was recently upset to have a sports trip canceled because the ferry was unavailable, and flights were not able to depart Skagway. He said to not be able to travel out of Skagway during inclement weather would be devastating.

[2:00:01 PM](#)

ELIZABETH BACOM testified in support of AMHS and argued that it is necessary for island communities. She relayed that her pickup truck had an airbag recall but no mechanic in Petersburg would make the repair. She explained that to barge the vehicle would have been a hassle and would have left her family without a vehicle for two weeks. She described the process through which she rode the ferry to get the truck repaired. "Even with the reduced schedule," she said, "it worked for us." She mentioned that there was a time in January when five consecutive Alaska Airlines flights over two and a half days did not arrive to or leave from Petersburg. "Without the ferry," she explained, "there is no redundancy in transportation for island communities that have failed air transport." She recalled that in the aftermath of [the terrorist attacks of September 11,

2001,] there were no planes flying for three days. She argued that, before cutting, there should be a thorough, unbiased, impact analysis.

[2:01:32 PM](#)

MARILYN MENISH-MEUCCI identified herself as a resident of Petersburg since 1961. She recalled watching M/V Malaspina make its first trip through Wrangell Narrows. She stated that she supports full funding for AMHS. She called AMHS crucial for residents of coastal communities. She said coastal residents use AMHS for almost everything connected to their lives. She remarked that there is not one state highway that pays for itself. She said she does not want \$90,000 spent on a consultant. She remarked, "The statewide steering committee looking into the future of the Alaska Marine Highway that is in place now should be trusted to come up with options." She noted that the steering committee members "all live here and have a vested interest in getting it right." She shared that she supports a state income tax, a \$10 school tax, and a smaller/eliminated PFD. She remarked, "Restart the reservations for the Alaska Marine Highway for this fall otherwise you will definitely kill the Alaska Marine Highway."

[2:02:39 PM](#)

CATHY RENFELDT, Executive Director, Cordova Chamber of Commerce, said AMHS is a vital and essential means of travel out of Cordova. She said it is also a necessary shipping resource for Cordova's businesses and the Copper River salmon fishery. She relayed that six of the nation's top 12 ports for commercial seafood landing rely on AMHS as their only connection to the hard road system. She stated that it is in the best interest of all Alaska businesses to have a year-round ferry system carrying customers. She remarked that dismantling AMHS would likely force up to 75,000 residents of 27 communities off the hard road system and cause them to make purchases through Seattle, completely bypassing Anchorage and the rest of Alaska. She stated that this would mean a huge loss of revenue for Alaska businesses. She opined that AMHS needs reform but noted that the AMHS Reform Steering Committee has already put time and money into a comprehensive study. She stressed that SOA should work off that study. She said SOA has many financial challenges but emphasized the importance of AMHS.

[2:03:59 PM](#)

DAVID OTNESS criticized Senate Bill 21 [passed in the Twenty-Eighth Alaska State Legislature] and the oil tax credits that resulted from it. He argued that Senate Bill 21 is the cause of the current budget debate. He noted that SOA funded AMHS for 15 years "prior to oil." He also referenced federal subsidies. He opined that the governor's proposed budget was drawn up by "ultra-right libertarian groups" with the goal of broad privatization. He suggested that people look up the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) to "find out what's going on with this governor and a lot of representatives."

[2:05:17 PM](#)

GEORGE REIFENSTEIN said he spent 18 years working on [AMHS] ships. He briefly discussed his career. He noted that he was appointed and served as Operations Manager during the administrations of Governors Steve Cowper, Wally Hickel, and Tony Knowles. He characterized AMHS as "a weave" that enables commerce, creates educational opportunities, and brings people together. He said it was "not an accident" that the surveying for AMHS ferry terminals began immediately after statehood. He characterized AMHS as "a compact to bring the rural communities on par with the more urban centers." He opined that it is important to remember that the connection delivered by AMHS was owed and promised to the people of Alaska.

[2:06:41 PM](#)

TRAVIS LEWIS, Alaskans For Alaska, said he grew up in the community of Elfin Cove and now lives in Hoonah. He noted that he cannot remember a major life or family event that did not involve a ferry ride. He relayed anecdotes of a birth and of a funeral involving a ferry ride. He identified himself as "a retired airborne infantry officer" and noted that he has been to six of the seven continents. He commented that everywhere where there is cheap energy and cheap transportation, there are healthy people and a thriving economy. He noted that the locations that do not have cheap energy and transportation are home to people in poverty. He asked the committee to not "turn the coastal area of Alaska into a third-world country situation." He remarked, "Everyone in Alaska is in the same lifeboat; if one side goes down, we're all going to get wet." He invited committee members to research Governor Jay Hammond's "original tax plan on the Permanent Fund and how it should be." He also invited committee members to look at reports on ferry revenue generated by the Southeast Conference. He asked the committee members to find a way to tax out-of-state businesses

that come to rural areas and do not contribute to local infrastructure, noting that coastal communities are overwhelmed.

2:08:20 PM

CALVIN WILSON, JR., Organized Village of Kake, identified himself as a representative of the Organized Village of Kake and said he works with the federal Tribal Transportation Program (TPP). He called AMHS "the lifeline of coastal communities across Alaska, including the Village of Kake." He said members of his village depend on AMHS for delivery of essential goods and services. He stated that the safety of the ferry system allows Kake's student athletes more opportunities to travel and compete. He said Kake residents rely on the ferry to connect with family in times of sadness and celebration. He said the Organized Village of Kake opposes any reduction in service or increase in ferry costs. He asked the chair's permission to submit Resolution 2019-03 by the Organized Village of Kake in full support of AMHS.

CHAIR STUTES let Mr. Wilson know that the committee aide would be happy to receive the resolution.

2:09:39 PM

DONALD WESTLUND noted that SB 38, which relates to disaster relief appropriations, does not contain funding for AMHS. He stated that this is a disaster for the coastal communities. He called AMHS the safest and longest highway in Alaska. He asked, "What price do you put on a life?" He said he supports using all PFD moneys for essential services. He added that he does not support an income tax. He stated that he does not want to pay back a portion of the PFD to SOA or the federal government. He restated that he would prefer SOA use all his PFD for essential services. He compared dismantling AMHS for Southeast and Southwest Alaska to tearing up Interstate-5 in the Lower 48. He asked the committee to please support and fund AMHS.

2:10:45 PM

CAMILLA GAINÉ stated that she is speaking on behalf of maritime communities. She identified herself as a resident of Alaska for almost 25 years and a current resident of Haines. She said she works for AMHS as an oiler on M/V Kennicott but is not testifying to defend her livelihood as she is retiring this year. She explained that she is advocating for a way of life and noted that Haines residents depend on ferry service for mail

delivery, access to healthcare, and job commuting. She said AMHS transports Haines's school children to wintertime competitions and broadens their educations by providing access to programs in other communities. She said year-round residents deserve improved, dependable, and more-affordable ferry service, especially in the winter months. She continued:

Does our governor and his imported [Office of Management & Budget] (OMB) director wish to shut down our year-round maritime communities? Or are they merely ambivalent because the AMHS is not part of their constellation of special interests?

[2:11:49 PM](#)

MJ CADLE identified herself as a resident of Ketchikan. She shared concerns about what would happen if AMHS shut down and there was another event like the [the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001], meaning residents of coastal communities would not be able to leave. She added that, in the event of a major emergency, no one would be able to send help to coastal communities. She expressed additional concerns about possible oil spills and the role of ferries in carrying responders to affected waters. She echoed previous concerns about healthcare and the high cost of flying to address medical needs. She stated that she is in favor of AMHS. She said she feels AMHS should be treated and funded the same as road highways. She said, "I think you should charge tolls on the highways of the North. If you close the ferries, close the highways; they're the same." She shared her support for including restaurants, bars, and gift shops on the ferries to increase revenue. She also shared her support for lower fares to increase ridership and revenue. She said there should be a ferry pass like the Eurail Pass. She stated that she would like to see an increased schedule to spur economic development. She shared concerns about increased shipping costs, noting that costs have doubled over the past decade. She remarked, "I am concerned this is a push for the capital move by decreasing access to Juneau and I am concerned it's a push for the highway out of Juneau."

[2:13:05 PM](#)

BETH SHORT-RHOADS identified herself as a Sitka resident representing herself. She remarked as follows:

We have a solution to our ferries. It's the Alaska Marine Highway Reform Initiative drafted by Southeast

Conference. This plan will make ferries a viable public corporation owned by Alaskans much like the Alaska railroad. Ferries are a good investment. They have a \$273 million economic impact, provide 17,000 good-paying jobs, and are a main source of transport for Alaska seafood. 2019 is a turning point for Alaska and we all feel it. Alaskans: We're turning out in record numbers. Keep speaking out. Talk to lawmakers about the ferry reform initiative. Lawmakers: We know you didn't take this job to watch out infrastructure crumble. 2019 is your opportunity to change history. Thank you.

[2:13:58 PM](#)

ROBERT NIELSEN identified himself as a Sitka resident representing himself. He reflected on the original intent of AMHS when it was established in the 1960s. He spoke to the previous isolation of coastal communities and the high price of groceries. He advocated for the entire legislature to take a holistic approach to lowering the cost of transportation across the state. He advocated for lower prices of groceries and fuel.

[2:15:11 PM](#)

FAITH LEE identified herself as a Sitka resident representing herself. She asked whether reductions to AMHS would reduce federal highway funding in Alaska, and by how much. She urged committee members to consider the impact of AMHS reductions to the culture of Alaska's coastal communities. She spoke to equal access to roads, connections, and gatherings. She noted that the ferries are the only means for some communities to access fresh produce. She added that the ferries allow members of coastal communities to come together and share meals, noting that there are no restaurants in small communities. She reiterated that cuts to the ferries impact the culture of the people of Alaska. She also mentioned the loss of living-wage jobs. She asked how many people would lose their jobs. She referenced cuts to education and asked how many people "in your department" would lose their jobs. She stated, "Alaskans must support Alaskans."

[2:16:26 PM](#)

CHANDLER O'CONNELL identified herself as "a born and raised Sitkan" representing herself. She said AMHS is critical for Sitka's small businesses, healthcare, educational opportunities,

family connections, emergency services, and independent travelers. She pointed to independent travelers as "a potential growth industry for our state." She said AMHS is essential infrastructure and just as fundamental as any of Alaska's state-funded roads. She said to eliminate AMHS would be discriminatory against coastal villages. She remarked that the state's current challenges offer an opportunity to discuss the kinds of infrastructure necessary to accomplish its goals and grow in the future. She shared her support for a progressive income tax and the repeal of some oil company subsidies before cutting essential services like AMHS. She asked committee members to listen to all the people who have called in to testify.

[2:17:36 PM](#)

MELISSA CULLUM said she moved to Southeast Alaska nearly 15 years ago. In that time, she explained, she has relied heavily on AMHS to travel for work, pleasure, and for medical reasons. She said AMHS connects over 30 villages and outlying communities to larger hubs throughout Southeast Alaska and Southwest Alaska. She noted that 57 to 62 percent of the ferries' total capacity is used to transport vehicles, goods, and services. She said the ferries serve the needs of two-thirds of Alaskans and are part of the national highway system, which receives funding in order to secure the nation's economy, defense, and mobility. She stated that the 3,500 miles of the Alaska Marine Highway accounts for 62 percent of the entire Alaska highway system. However, she said, the funds that support AMHS are the only ones being considered for cuts. She paraphrased Congressman Don Young by saying the success of Alaska's economy depends directly on AMHS's ability to move people and product efficiently and safely.

[2:19:10 PM](#)

COLTON WELCH identified himself as a lifelong Juneau resident representing himself. He called it "an absolute slap in the face to Coastal Alaska and to rural communities" that the AMHS budget is "on the chopping block" while SOA continues to subsidize oil companies, pays out large PFDs, and refuses to impose an income tax. He noted that Alaska had an income tax well before the PFD. He said SOA has an obligation to serve its people, especially its indigenous people. He shared that he has many family members in Kake and expressed that, without the ferries, he would not have had the opportunity to spend time with them. He continued:

I feel as though when you take these things away from us that you are condemning our families, our cultures, our ways of life, saying that "You are not good enough, because you're not on the road system."

MR. WELCH made a call to representatives to "stand up for us" and asked that they form a veto-proof majority. He expressed how worried he is and said the current budget situation appears bleak, which is why so many people have testified passionately.

[2:20:27 PM](#)

JANICE LEVY identified herself as a lifelong Juneau resident and said she opposes cuts to AMHS. She said AMHS is the highway that connects Southeast Alaska economically, medically, educationally, socially, and culturally. She cited AMHS as the reason why Southeast Alaska has become a cohesive region. She noted that AMHS was not "built overnight" and warned that the dismantling of the system would not be easily fixable. She suggested repealing Senate Bill 21 [passed in the Twenty-Eighth Alaska State Legislature], halving oil production tax credits, or making it so the credits only go into effect when the price of oil drops to \$40 per barrel. She quoted a Juneau Empire opinion piece by former Senator Joe Paskvan: "The forecasted credit each year through 2028 is never less than \$1 billion a year." She emphasized the \$1 billion figure.

[2:21:43 PM](#)

HEATHER PETERSON said the ferry has been a vital lifeline to her community in Kodiak and its surrounding villages. She described how the ferries helped her parents operate a rental car business. She said AMHS brings tourists to Kodiak daily and this keeps the business alive. She noted that 7,000 people live in Kodiak and an additional 7,000 people reside on the grounds of the USCG base there. She said the ferries enable Kodiak residents to travel to the mainland. She said this allows them to shop for cars and school clothes, as well as to drive to the Lower 48. She commented that the ferry enables the annual Kodiak Crab Festival, which allows residents and people from the surrounding villages to come together. She said she resents comments that she deems ignorant, such as "You choose to live there." She noted that she was born in Kodiak and AMHS has connected her to her home state all her life.

[2:22:47 PM](#)

PAT JACOBSEN said, "I don't think there could be too much testimony in favor of the ferry system, which is so important to coastal communities." She recounted riding ferries to move her nieces in at University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). She described paying an expensive fee to ride the ferry but not having to pay to use the roads to Anchorage. She said she understands and supports that ferries charge fees for their use. She continued, "Not one highway pays for itself, but all provide important travel opportunities and add to the quality of life in this great state." She noted that, although she has not driven on state highways for several years, she recognizes that other Alaskans rely on them and therefore she supports all aspects of the highway system. She said Alaska is known for its residents' independence, but also for the way they support others. She said, "In many aspects of life, we are all in this together. I support the land highways, but certainly the marine highways as well."

[2:23:54 PM](#)

MARY FORBES echoed what previous testifiers had said about AMHS. She said she strongly supports toll roads on the mainland. She noted that it is a part of life in the Lower 48, where the money paid in tolls goes toward the maintenance and upkeep of the road. She said if the ferries are going to be cut, then there needs to be tolls on mainland highways as well.

[2:24:32 PM](#)

SHAWN DOCHTERMANN identified himself as 41-year resident of Kodiak. He said he supports fully funding AMHS. He said he concurs with all prior testimony except for testimony in support of privatizing AMHS. He said his primary concern after fully funding AMHS is a replacement vessel for M/V Tustumena, which he noted was built in 1963. He remarked that M/V Tustumena incurs cost overruns every time it undergoes maintenance. He said the 2019 capital budget appropriated \$29 million as matching funds for a \$244 million replacement ferry, meaning the federal government would fund 90 percent of the cost. He called that a great deal. He noted that Governor Dunleavy's proposed budget removes those funds and "put[s] all of that in the highway fund," which he said is inappropriate. He remarked that a proposal was supposed to be issued in January 2019 and a shipbuilder selected in July 2019. He asked committee members to "forge ahead with getting all the money needed and getting the [\$29 million] back where it's supposed to be."

[2:25:50 PM](#)

MATT MOIR, North Pacific Seafoods, said he is testifying in support of AMHS. He relayed that many goods and services move between Kodiak and the mainland, including frozen seafood and commercial fishing gear. He stated that it is important to have an affordable way for instate commerce to function. He said AMHS is one of the most affordable modes of transportation for the Kodiak community. He said the ferries also transport crew members, supplies, vehicles, and coastal community athletic teams. He encouraged committee members to support AMHS.

[2:26:52 PM](#)

JOSH COUGHRAN, Superintendent, Skagway School District, said he is accompanied by several high school students and the student government advisor. He stated that they have inspired his comments. He said AMHS represents the lifeblood of the community, especially as relates to the school. He commented that it is difficult to quantify just how much the school district depends on ferry service in Skagway. He said the cessation of service would fundamentally change the way Skagway School operates and would ultimately result in Skagway's children receiving a less robust educational experience and would threaten the wellbeing of some of the school's most vulnerable students. He noted that the district does not have the capacity to employ special service providers such as physical therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, speech pathologists, vision and hearing screening providers, and people authorized to provide immunizations. He said he could speak at length about the vital medical services provided by AMHS to communities like Skagway that do not have a medical doctor or surgical facilities. He said the ferry is important to Skagway's year-round economy and helps the district train its staff.

[2:28:10 PM](#)

PAIGE ROSS introduced herself in English and in Tlingit. She said she is [*indisc.*] years old. She identified herself as a student of Kake City School District. She said Kake has access to air travel but noted that the weather is often inclement. She shared that she has severe food allergies which require many shots. She said that this makes it harder for her to travel on planes than on ferries. She said she must travel by ferry to get her food. She shared that she would be a junior high

basketball player in the fall, and that it would be safer for her to travel by ferry than by plane. She said that, without ferries, the lives of people in Kake will be more difficult than they are now. She asked the committee members to not cut the ferry. She thanked the committee in English and in Tlingit.

[2:29:10 PM](#)

JACKIE MULLER said he is opposed to cuts to and the privatization of AMHS. He said it is "a lifeline for the villages."

[2:29:54 PM](#)

PAUL NELSON identified himself as a resident of Haines representing himself. He noted that a person named Tracey Harmon had to leave before she was able to testify. He requested that AMHS and other essential public transportation systems not be shut down. He said Alaska has the capital, the people, and the resources to operate AMHS and all essential public services. He said what Alaska does not have is a management strategy that uses available resources to maintain essential public services and distribute a PFD. He remarked that there are companies and nations with far fewer resources than Alaska that are using proper resource management to service the people who own those resources. He said he would contact every legislator with the outline for how this is being done.

[2:31:07 PM](#)

TONY TENGS identified himself as a retired ferry worker and a former bartender. He said that, in order to pay expenses, AMHS has increased fares to the point where many people decide not to travel with it. He said another big problem is that those who can afford the trip do not want to ride the ferry. He attributed this to the elimination of basic elements of hospitality, such as onboard bars. He remarked, "The AMHS representative lied to the legislature in saying that not even one route was profitable with the bar position." He said that becomes irrelevant when one considers loss of gross revenue from travelers not wanting to sail with AMHS due to the lack of basic hospitality during what can be a long and stressful trip. He recalled how AMHS moved people south in the days after [the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001] when they could not fly.

[2:32:16 PM](#)

PENELOPE OSWALT identified herself as a resident of Cordova and said she represents herself and her husband. She said she believes SOA needs to fund AMHS as a transportation corridor for rural Alaskans, as it was originally intended. She remarked that many have worked for several years on a possible reform plan to keep AMHS alive and sustainable. She said Governor Dunleavy's proposed budget demonstrates that he means to gut any possible system. She said the reasons why Alaska's coastal communities need ferries have already been stated [by other testifiers]. She said she wants legislators to help keep rural communities economically viable. She urged legislators to roll back credits to oil companies and charge what other oil states charge to harvest resources. She requested the institution of a state education and income tax to ensure all users of Alaska's systems pay their fair share. She asked that the Permanent Fund [Dividend] be reduced to what it was originally intended to be, which she clarified is "a bonus, not something to support your families on." She continued, "Please take the politics out of our transportation system" and asked that AMHS be funded. She concluded by saying Alaska is so much more than Anchorage and Fairbanks. She said, "We do believe in ferries."

[2:33:29 PM](#)

BECKY CHAPEK echoed the testimony of Ms. Oswalt. She said it is tedious to have to grovel about the ferry year after year. She called AMHS an essential service that "we don't necessarily deserve, but that we have, and we need to keep." She said the issue of AMHS is a political football. She stated that the legislature is a team without a coach. Continuing the metaphor, she said the quarterback gets selected by popular vote, so he or she is not always the best person to "figure out what to do." She said there does not appear to be a long-term plan and opined that it is not a very good way to run a business. She characterized the AMHS issue as "political terrorism" and spoke of more to come with "the budget shortfall," which she said was the reason why the Permanent Fund was founded.

[2:34:45 PM](#)

DEBRA ADAMS identified herself as a 40-plus year resident of Cordova. She expressed disappointment that not all committee members are present, noting that AMHS is a crucial issue for many communities. She said the entire committee needs to hear this testimony. She took issue with the assertion that SOA is "subsidizing the ferry system." She clarified that AMHS is "our

road" and roads are not subsidized, they are maintained. She said AMHS is important to fishing families like hers because they use it to acquire thousands of dollars' worth of equipment from Anchorage. She said the ferry also carries fishing families' product to Anchorage. She said she is a teacher of 20-plus years and said the ferry is the most economical means of travel for Cordova residents.

[2:36:01 PM](#)

MARY DAHLE said a comprehensive AMHS is vital to Alaska. She commented that most of the fleet was built prior to the [Trans-Alaska Pipeline System]. She noted that numerous independent surveys have shown that Alaska's Interior benefits from AMHS. For every dollar spend on AMHS, she explained, \$2.30 is returned to Alaska's economy. She said the impact of the proposed cuts would be devastating to Alaska's economy. She commented that reducing AMHS's budget by \$96 million would wipe out almost \$221 million of economic activity within Alaska. She expressed that she does not believe privatizing the system is the answer, as SOA would lose control over vital infrastructure. She concluded by saying it is SOA's responsibility to provide solid infrastructure. She said supporting a solid, government-run AMHS is supporting the greater Alaska economy.

[2:37:07 PM](#)

ERIC WALLEN identified himself as a 40-year resident of Ketchikan. He said he hopes the committee members are all familiar with the 2016 McDowell Group study that showed AMHS's economic impact far exceeds its costs. She remarked that a highway is the lifeblood of an economy. "When you shut down a highway," he said, "you kill commerce." He opined that Alaska cannot afford that. He said the benefits provided by the ferries are countless and understated. He said they provide access to other communities, to shopping opportunities, and to healthcare. He relayed that, during the previous week, M/V Malaspina transported over 400 Southeast Alaska students to and from Sitka. He said it is completely irresponsible to not plan to fund AMHS. He commented that the damage to ridership is probably already happening as reservations are not being taken beyond October 1. He said this undermines trust in AMHS's reliability. He said it also appears to be purposeful and malicious mismanagement to disregard the 2016 McDowell Group study in order to spend \$60-90,000 to get another study hoping to get a more desirable answer. He said he would like to see a

commitment to full funding of AMHS for the residents of and visitors to Alaska.

[2:38:17 PM](#)

GLENN WADE said he has "lived here" since the mid-1970s. He said he is here to add strength to the voice to keep AMHS running. He recognized "the abundance of reasons" why AMHS should keep running and expressed his shock that "this process" has to exist. He said Governor Dunleavy's administration needs to hear these reasons. He questioned whether it is legal to remove infrastructure and public safety measures for only one segment of the state. He noted that this would not treat all citizens equally as it would penalize 10 percent of the population. He suggested that all Alaska highways should be treated equally in order to keep AMHS going.

[2:39:17 PM](#)

KRIS BENSON identified herself as a 20-year resident of Juneau testifying on behalf of herself. She said the proposed cut to AMHS that caused the cessation of winter service is no different than a cut to the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOTPF) maintenance budget that might cause it to close the Parks Highway for the winter to save money on plowing. She agreed that this is an equity issue. She suggested that the discussion about cuts needs to be refocused on revenue. She opined that residents do not need a big PFD and mused that they did not previously receive a big PFD. She said she would much rather have state services and the continued existence of AMHS. She stated that she wants to see the implementation of an income tax as well as equitable taxation of oil companies.

[2:40:15 PM](#)

JAYNE ANDREEN identified herself as a 25-year resident of Douglas and a previous resident of Homer. She said she has ridden ferries throughout her 40 years. She recalled times when the ferries allowed her to travel to Juneau when flights had been canceled. She said AMHS is a delightful way to travel. She echoed previous reasons for continued ferry services. She shared an anecdote of a friend who required emergency eye surgery in Seattle. The friend had an air bubble injected into his eye which precluded him from flying for six weeks. She said that once he was released, her friend thought he would be able to take the ferry out of Bellingham, but unfortunately M/V Columbia was out of service at the time. She explained that he

was reduced to buying a cruise ship passage to get home. She said she supports an income tax and the elimination of oil company subsidies. "When we have an unexpected expense," she said, "we find the revenue to cover it."

[2:41:32 PM](#)

BOB SYLVESTER said he supports full funding for AMHS, including upkeep that has been recently lacking. He requested a return to a fuller schedule. He said he is willing to pay through a broad-based graduated tax that includes all workers, including non-residents. He stated that he has been riding the ferry since the 1970s and called it "an enjoyable way to get around, and a necessary one."

[2:42:32 PM](#)

STAN HJORT said he is representing himself as well as everyone who benefits from the ferries. He stated, "Governor Bill Egan figured that when the ferries were started, we were money-ahead because we didn't have to build the roads." He said most roads in the Railbelt region were built by the federal government before or during World War II. He said residents of the Railbelt region are using roads for which they never had to pay. He said that includes the Alaska Railroad. He remarked, "Raising prices when revenues are down is absolutely stupid." He requested a "driver rides free with vehicles" option for the ferry, especially during the winter. He said this would be a trade stimulator. He suggested the reopening of onboard bars and gift shops. He explained that it is obvious that a well-managed bar will add revenue. He said a large portion of summer ridership travels to the Interior. He added that the dollar amount associated with those travelers surprised even him.

[2:43:49 PM](#)

GAYLE NICHOLSON TRIVETTE identified herself as a resident of Juneau. She said she agrees with previous testimony in support of AMHS. She explained that she was born and raised in Petersburg and has traveled by ferry since "they first steamed up the Narrows" when she was 15 years old. She said she has long-relied on the ferries for commuting, to visit her family, and to help support her 90-year-old mother so that she can continue to live independently in her own home. She described it as painful to watch the ferries be neglected over the last several years. She said they used to be full of not just locals, but also tourists who would visit small communities.

She said the ferries were previously well-marketed and featured [more] incentives for people to travel on them. She encouraged committee members to look at different types of revenue.

[2:44:54 PM](#)

JOHN KISER identified himself as a resident of Southeast Alaska presently in Cordova. He said he is also in favor of preserving AMHS funding. He noted that, due to present job uncertainty and an upcoming Washington State Ferries (WSF) retirement bubble, "we're about to lose several trained ferry workers." He suggested moving quickly to avoid this. He stated that the military does not eliminate poorly performing units, rather it gets rids of the leadership. He suggested that the administration needs to "study the issue" and replace bad management making bad decisions. He said he is also in favor of a state tax and reducing the PFD before reducing AMHS funding. He continued, "That gives us enough time to elect people who will do the right thing."

[2:45:47 PM](#)

MICHAEL MICKELSON identified himself as a lifelong resident of Cordova testifying in support of AMHS on behalf of himself and his business. He said he strongly opposes major cuts to AMHS while there are no commensurate cuts to the land-based state highway system. He said he supports an oil tax and would be happy to pay an income tax or stop receiving a PFD to support AMHS and other essential state services. He stated that there are plenty of worldwide models of ferry systems that work. He concluded, "Let's work to make ours better."

[2:46:29 PM](#)

KAY GUYMON identified herself as a 50-year resident of Ketchikan. She said she has never seen a highway system pay for itself. She continued, "How would we expect our ferry system to pay for itself?" She opined that AMHS is very badly managed and suggested "they should really look at that."

[2:46:53 PM](#)

SUSAN WALSH said she is here to join the hundreds of citizens who have spoken out against cuts to AMHS. She stated that when Governor Dunleavy campaigned in Southeast Alaska, he spoke passionately about returning the state to more prosperous times like when he arrived in 1983. She commented that the governor's

proposed budget cuts would return Alaska back to territorial times. She said the state's fiscal dilemma should be shared equitably through a progressive income tax or a [PFD] returned to the 1983 figure of \$383. She opined that oil companies should also pay their fair share. She requested that the 2016 McDowell Group study on the economic impacts of AMHS be used. She said if a new study is to be commissioned, then the suggestions of ferry workers should be considered, as they recognize the system's problems and can offer viable solutions. She drew a contrast between ferry workers and those who do not have "the vaguest idea of the integral part this highway plays as the lifeline for Alaska citizens."

[2:47:52 PM](#)

MIKE SALLEE identified himself as a lifelong resident of Ketchikan. He said he has used the ferries since AMHS's inception and rode the ferry to travel to Fairbanks to attend UAF in the mid-1960s. He listed additional communities in Southeast Alaska and beyond to which he has traveled via AMHS. He compared AMHS to land highways and noted that AMHS does not require ditches to be dug, roads to be plowed, or avalanches to be cleared. He said he has used AMHS as a dive fisherman for boat transportation; he noted that he knows other divers who use ferries to travel back and forth to the fisheries. He explained that this generally occurs between October and December.

[2:49:26 PM](#)

TRINA ARNOLD, Regional Director, Juneau Office, Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific, said she represents 400 crewmembers on the vessels at this time. She stated that eliminating AMHS would eliminate 400 jobs from "our communities." She said there is an understanding that the ferries are essential. She said to cut the ferries would cut off Alaskans from the rest of the state. She mentioned that she was born and raised in Alaska and is a third generation AMHS employee. She said, "This saddens me; this is very emotional for me. This was part of my life, my childhood, and many of us in Southeast Alaska and the Aleutian Chains are very affected by this. Please fund the Alaska Marine Highway."

[2:50:33 PM](#)

JAMES FOSTER identified himself as a 30-year resident of Southeast Alaska and a current resident of Haines. He said he represents the voice of reason. He stated that privatizing AMHS

is a mistake. He said AMHS is a highway and should be administered as such. He referenced privatization efforts in Canada that he said did not work. He added, "They also tried fast ferries if you don't remember. Didn't work." He commented on the sizable salaries paid to Canadian ferry CEOs. He stated that Canada now has less service and higher fares. He added that workers took a 30 percent cut in wages and benefits. He said thousands of Canadians have signed petitions to bring administration back under government control. He asked, "Would you privatize Egan Drive, set up a toll booth, and let the profiteers reap the profits?" He said, "We don't need carpetbaggers running the ferries, taking profits at Alaskans' cost and livelihoods, and risking our lives without access." He restated that the Canada example shows that privatization does not work.

[2:52:08 PM](#)

JEFF KASPER, Southeast Regional Manager, Alaska Public Employees Association, said the Alaska Public Employees Association (APEA) supports year-round ferry service fully funded to all communities that are currently served. He commented on the "extraordinary and unprecedented amount of public testimony on this matter" and said, "to me, it seems like the people have spoken."

[2:52:54 PM](#)

JUSTIN PARISH said it is strange that tremendous uncertainty is being thrust upon the communities of Coastal Alaska. He referenced his time as a legislator and member of the House Resources Standing Committee, noting that he often heard how unfair it is to cause uncertainty by discussing the rate of the subsidies that SOA provides to the oil industry. He stated that Governor Dunleavy's administration is putting communities in fear of their existences and putting families in fear of their lives. He said some families need to travel regularly for medical reasons and there is not another economical or reliable means of transport available to them. He added that the administration is putting children in fear of their futures by jeopardizing a fundamental part of their educations. He called it "profoundly unjust." He asked committee members to pass a veto-proof budget.

[2:54:09 PM](#)

DAN EGOLF identified himself as a ski shop and tour company owner in Haines. He agreed with previous testifiers who said reduced scheduling caused reduced ridership. He said that his store benefited for 15 years from promotion of the Golden Circle Route between Whitehorse, Haines, and Skagway. He discussed the steady stream of summer motorhome campers to the three communities until M/V LeConte was put on that route. He explained that M/V LeConte is "tiny" and could not accommodate the motorhomes, so "that revenue was lost." He said the Haines-Skagway-Juneau ferry route used to make money. He noted that no roads in Alaska make money. He asked, "Where have our federal ferry funds gone?" He said there has been a maritime culture in Coastal Alaska for thousands of years. He said, "We live in one of the safest, most efficient, environmentally friendly, God-given transportation corridors on the planet." He said other states like Washington have figured out how to move people reliably using federal funds on ferries. He asked, "Why not Alaska?" He stated that any assertion that well-managed ferries are more expensive than roads lacks credibility.

[2:55:39 PM](#)

PATRICK PHILPOTT identified himself as a lifelong resident of Haines and a strong supporter of AMHS. He commented that between 1969 and 1971 the United States Forest Service conducted a complete survey between Ketchikan and Haines to plan for a combined road and ferry system through the Tongass National Forest. He suggested the maps from that survey need to be found and examined.

[2:56:29 PM](#)

JAN WRENTMORE, President, Skagway Marine Access Commission (SMAC), described SMAC as a nonprofit corporation made up of small businesspeople and marine professionals. She said she has owned and operated numerous businesses in the tourism industry over the past 40 years. She called Governor Dunleavy's proposed cuts to AMHS "a death sentence for small businesses in rural Alaska." She said hundreds of businesses would close if ferry service were discontinued. She said the economic impact would be felt by communities as far as north as Anchorage, Fairbanks, and beyond. She said visitors to Alaska who arrive by ferry spend money in coffee shops, restaurants, bed and breakfasts, recreational vehicle (RV) parks, and gift shops all along the highway system. She stressed that significant damage has already been done by shutting down reservations for the fall.

She asked for full funding for AMHS and thanked the committee for hearing and acknowledging extensive testimony.

2:58:20 PM

SETH HOWARD identified himself as a Juneau resident. He said he has in front of him DOTPF's informal request for proposals for the AMHS economic reshaping consultant job. He pointed out that the final revision on the request was made on February 3, 2019, two weeks before the governor announced his proposed budget. He said he would read two of the options encouraged by Governor Dunleavy's administration. He read:

"Number one: Reshape the entire AMHS operation by selling or giving all vessels and terminals to a private entity to run whatever service they can justify economically."

MR. HOWARD quipped, "Great plan. He continued:

"Number nine: Implement further fare increases, including across-the-board increases on more expensive runs, demand pricing for high-demand period or events, demand pricing based on percent of remaining vessel capacity.

MR. HOWARD asked how this plan would generate revenue for the state, how it is in the best interest of the public, and when SOA is going to "stop stepping over dollars to pick up dimes."

2:59:29 PM

PAT PALKOVIC said she worked 26-plus years in Southeast Alaska and is currently looking for a job in Southcentral Alaska. She said most of Alaska's population lives on or near the coast. She said AMHS ferries are a form of transportation that can access most of the state's population. She added that AMHS has the flexibility to respond to emergencies and natural disasters. She said that is why M/V Kennicott was built in the way it was. She noted that, during the summer, AMHS is the one form of surface transportation that allows people to travel from one part of the state to another without going through another country. She added that it is also one of the two forms of surface transportation that connects Alaska to the Lower 48. She noted that the other form of transportation is a two-lane road that goes through a foreign country. She said she learned

as a retail store order that one needs a critical mass of inventory to bring in customers. She stated that AMHS needs to bring back its "critical mass of services."

[3:00:45 PM](#)

FRED STURMAN said he just got off the ferry in Haines after visiting Seattle. He noted that it is cheaper for him to drive, but riding the ferry is "one of those deals that you've always wanted to do, so I did it." He reported seeing "quite a bit of dead wood" on the ferry. He argued that if AMHS receives cuts, there should be similar cuts on the Kenai Peninsula - where he resides - and to other departments and areas of the state. He said the state needs everyone to take a big cut because "we're \$1 billion in debt." He said that is \$2,000 for every man, woman, and child in Alaska. He advocated for major cuts to all areas of the state budget.

[3:01:47 PM](#)

MIKE MCCARTHY identified himself as a Homer resident representing himself and his wife. He said they represent 85 years as Alaska residents. He noted that he has been a ferry rider since he moved to Kodiak in 1989 and that he used the ferry to move to Homer in 1997. He spoke about visiting Valdez and Cordova via the ferry system. He said he has never heard anything as crazy as privatizing AMHS. He stated it would be too expensive to even consider and suggested that "whoever brought this idea forward needs a medical exam." He compared the idea to Project Chariot, which was a plan to use nuclear explosives to construct an artificial harbor at Cape Thompson on the North Slope. He said the plan to privatize AMHS needs to be terminated like Project Chariot was. He asked for continued support and funding of AMHS.

[3:02:55 PM](#)

POPPY BENSON identified herself as a longtime resident of Homer. She shared that she has extensive experience with AMHS and noted that she established the naturalist program on M/V Tustumena 30 years ago. She noted that the naturalist program is among the amenities that has been "kicked off the ship" over the past eight years. She said she has experience with ferries in Prince William Sound and Southeast Alaska. She echoed previous speakers who characterized AMHS as a highway for people who live in coastal villages. She said AMHS should be treated the same as any other highway. She stated that she does not understand

why SOA expects the highway to make money. She recommended an evaluation of how AMHS is managed and how decisions are made. She acknowledged that transportation patterns change over time and more people fly than did when AMHS was established in the 1960s. She shared that she looks forward to looking into studies mentioned by previous speakers. She concluded by saying she fully supports maintaining the ferry system.

[3:04:17 PM](#)

BECKY WORKMAN identified herself as a lifelong resident of Sitka testifying for herself. She said she agrees with most of the points raised by previous speakers. She stated that she does not support a PFD tax, a state income tax, or privatizing the ferry. She said there are other ways to get money. She stated, "If they're going to shut down our road system from October to June, they need to shut down all road systems from October to June." She said then maybe residents of the Interior would know what it feels like to have "your freedom on the line." She thanked the committee and stated that she would submit a written statement as well.

[3:05:19 PM](#)

JAN TROJAN, from Craig, Alaska, noted that Mary Ellen Skinna, an elder, had to leave before she was able to testify. Ms. Trojan relayed that Ms. Skinna wanted to say that the ferry is extremely important to Prince of Wales Island and that she would support a state tax. Ms. Trojan said she is representing the people and veterans of Prince of Wales Island. She said there are 5,000 people on the island who depend on the ferry for things like cancer treatment and orthopedic consult. She said the ferry is the lifeblood of her community even more so than for Ketchikan, which is located "on the next island over." She identified herself as a cancer survivor and said cuts to AMHS would impact the health of people on Prince of Wales Island. She said the ferry is necessary for someone who is going to have to travel for 12 weeks to receive chemotherapy treatment. She reiterated that Prince of Wales needs the ferry.

CHAIR STUTES asked Ms. Trojan to identify the people in Craig who had signed up to testify but had to leave.

MS. TROJAN named Mary Ellen Skinna and Gregory Shapely, who she identified as elders. She said Irving Langmaid had to go to work. She also confirmed that Martin Dale had previously been present but had to leave.

3:07:09 PM

LACY FOSMORE identified herself as a ferry worker. She said it is abundantly clear from the bountiful testimony that AMHS should continue to be funded. She added that AMHS should be funded just like any other highway in the state. She said she worked on the Dalton Highway when she first moved to Alaska. She noted that there are far fewer residents living on the Dalton Highway than there are along the Alaska Marine Highway. She asked committee members to consider that and to keep funding AMHS.

3:08:18 PM

SARAH ROARK identified herself as an AMHS employee. She asked if any of the committee members has been on the ferry when there has been an elder returning to Angoon to be laid to rest. She said she has and shared that it was a very emotional experience. She described the drumming and singing, as well as the participation of the entire village. She said if the proposed budget cuts go through, that experience and event would no longer happen. She opined that the proposed cuts to AMHS are disrespectful and unnecessary. She suggested that the legislature take her PFD, implement an income tax, modify the oil tax credit system, and invest in the future.

3:09:24 PM

CHRISTINE NIEMI said she is representing herself, her husband, her two grown daughters, her son-in-law, and her grandson. She stated that AMHS is vital to help maintain her family ties. She shared with committee members a photo of her grandson, Malcolm, riding the ferry on his way home from Hoonah, where he was visiting relatives. She explained that her husband had to go to Seattle for surgery several months prior and was told not to return by plane. She compared this situation to a scenario described by an earlier testifier. She noted that she and her husband had already arranged to ride the ferry home from Bellingham. She thanked AMHS for getting her and her husband home. She opined that a government that provides services to its citizens is not too big. She argued that providing state subsidies to [private for-profit] businesses while leaving citizens without services is "not the right thing to do."

3:10:46 PM

BRIAN MCCARTHY identified himself as a retired deck officer who worked for AMHS for 32 years. He said he has been to all the villages mentioned by previous testifiers. He shared that he spent half his time in Southeast Alaska and the other half in Southwest Alaska. He spoke to what AMHS provides those communities and what AMHS gets out of them. He said AMHS keeps people together and links families. He shared experiences during which he saw joy, love, and sadness. He echoed what Ms. Roark had previously said about the beauty of a funeral ceremony. He said he wants his family to have the same opportunities he had. He argued that it would not be fair to deprive future generations of those opportunities. He said he is willing to take a smaller PFD.

[3:12:11 PM](#)

NOLA LAMKEN remarked as follows:

Listen to the cries from Auk'w Kwaan ancestors. The governor's careless suggestion strands and abandons elders and people with disabilities who cannot climb the 3-foot steps on many of the small planes even when they can fly. Already, fares have been raised beyond reason causing pain and suffering. State ferries were first formed because private ownership was not sustainable. Listeners here laughed at the idea proposed of putting tolls on Anchorage and Fairbanks highways; unbearable ferry toll increases and unreliable eradicate schedules are just as ludicrous. I support the Southeast Conference and the Marine Access Commission, not the millions wasted on private consultants - many who had never stepped on Alaska ferries - and their clueless studies. Listen to the experienced wisdom and knowledge earned by the ferry workers and concerned citizens. Please restore full ferry funding, quality, reliability, and affordability.

[3:13:48 PM](#)

BOB CRUISE said that, while he appreciates the committee taking testimony on AMHS, he is astonished there is even a need for the public to come before legislators in support of "this vital piece of infrastructure." He suggested that the economists and consultants hired by Governor Dunleavy to craft his proposed budget "must have skipped Econ 101, because in that class they would have learned that a vital, solid infrastructure is vital

and needed to support our economy." He expressed that the fabric of coastal communities is woven into the Alaska Marine Highway. He said AMHS enables members of those communities to travel, to enjoy each other's company, and to come together for events like the Klondike Road [Relay] and the Alaska Folk Festival.

[3:15:13 PM](#)

ELLIE CULLUM said residents of Angoon gets their food via the ferry and SOA cannot take that from them. She said those residents would have to move from their hometown. She explained that she has family in Angoon. She said they should be able to live where they want, and they want to live in Angoon.

[3:16:20 PM](#)

ANN FOSTER DOMBKOWSKI said she and her father were both born in Juneau. She said her father was born to a Klondike gold miner. She recalled seeing the ferries first arrive when she was in fourth grade. She called Juneau a working-class economy and said she hopes that can continue. She asked to be taxed so that citizens can have services. She went over the history of ferries going back to the 1950s. She opined that there is "no reason for us to not have these ferries." She concluded, "We're working class people; we can pay taxes. We've done it for decades."

[3:17:32 PM](#)

FRANK LEE echoed the sentiments of previous testifiers. He recalled riding ferries as far back as when he was in high school in the 1960s. He expressed that the catamarans that have been proposed as ferry replacements would not be able to handle difficult conditions. He recalled visiting Ketchikan in 1968 when the wind was blowing 70 miles per hour. He expressed hope that legislators "would work it out" and that ferry service would continue.

[3:18:47 PM](#)

HEATHER LENDE, Assembly Member, Haines Borough Assembly, said she is speaking for herself and identified herself as a member of the Haines Borough Assembly. She said she has waited six hours to speak and expressed gratitude to the committee for taking testimony. She shared that the people of Haines feel especially committed to AMHS because it was founded in Haines

well over 60 years ago. She said AMHS was founded to connect the coastal communities to each other and to the rest of the world in order to build a thriving coastal region in Southeast Alaska. She said that has been a huge success. She urged support for AMHS and asked that it not be shut down. She advocated for "a more reliable system with the plan adopted by the Southeast Conference." She said she is happy to pay for her tickets. She said she supports a state income tax. She asked committee members to consider at least a 1 percent tax on the richest corporations in the world doing business in Alaska, rather than cutting essential services. She said she would also give up her PFD to make that happen. She concluded, "The governor has called his budget 'agnostic', but I have faith in Alaskans and in you to do the right thing and support the people of this state."

3:20:18 PM

CATHRYN COATS said she supports AMHS. She shared that, when she was born 37 years ago, she was brought home from the hospital on the ferry from Ketchikan to Prince of Wales Island. She added that her son was also brought home on the ferry when he was born eight years ago. She said her mother worked for the Inter-Island Ferry Authority. She stated that [AMHS] is very important to her and her family. She commented on the "decline of the system in Southeast" and recalled riding the ferry when it had a gift shop and Tony Tengs [an earlier testifier] worked in the bar. She opined that AMHS's upper-level management can be "improved upon." She said the jobs provided by AMHS are vital to Southeast Alaska and other coastal areas. She identified herself as a veteran and discussed the importance of being able to travel back and forth from Prince of Wales Island to Ketchikan for medical care.

3:21:38 PM

MARGIE DEMMERT said she supports the ferries and shared that her job would be in jeopardy without AMHS. She said she works at Angoon's only grocery store, which obtains its produce and groceries via the ferry. She said Angoon's schools use AMHS to travel. She stated, "When we lose a loved one, they bring them home on the ferry." She said AMHS allows her family to have an affordable vacation without having to spend thousands of dollars on airplane tickets. She described the ferry as "the only lifeline" in and out of her village. She noted that residents use the ferry to travel for medical care, explaining that village elders cannot get in and out of seaplanes. She restated

that residents use the ferry to access medical care and to attend family reunions. She asked committee members not to take away the ferry.

3:22:55 PM

LAURA STEELE, after some brief technical difficulties, identified herself as a third-generation Alaskan representing herself. She referenced a recent comment on AMHS made by Senator Shelley Hughes: "The whining and crying to maintain the status quo is sad." She said she disagrees with Senator Hughes. She said, "Alaskans are not whining or crying; we are speaking out for the services that we depend on and doing what we can to be part of a solution." She called the reaction of Alaskans admirable and not sad. She said it embodies the very spirit of Alaska. She continued:

What is sad is that we have a governor who would rather pay out billions of dollars in oil tax cuts to oil companies than keep Alaskans in the coastal areas connected to reliable, affordable transportation. And he would rather cut off Southeast Alaska and other coastal communities than do the unpopular thing and cut our PFDs.

MS. STEELE said she would rather have a cut PFD or no PFD than see coastal communities cut off. She said she would rather pay an income tax than see her neighbors "pay the dangerous price of being isolated from urban centers." She pleaded, "Please listen to Alaskans. We believe in ferries."

3:25:09 PM

RICHARD COOK identified himself as a 35-year Alaska resident and a 25-year AMHS employee. He urged legislators to bring forth a rational, veto-proof counterproposal to Governor Dunleavy's "proposed draconian cuts." He said it is true that AMHS has suffered from mismanagement and political influences for many years. He stressed that the solution is not "to throw the baby out with the bathwater." He requested reforms to rather than elimination of AMHS. He said the loss of AMHS would devastate coastal communities and would negatively impact the entire state. He said the same applies for the rest the governor's proposed budget. He said he would find a large PFD check of little lasting value when compared to the loss of livelihood and communities.

[3:26:15 PM](#)

SHAWNA WILLIAMS-BUCHANAN identified herself as a commercial fisherman who currently fishes out of Cordova. She said that, as a third-generation fisherman who has fished all her life, she has spent the past 40 years utilizing AMHS. She said she has ridden the ferry between Whittier and Cordova 19 times in the last year alone. She said the elimination of AMHS would cripple rural communities. She said she is in favor of AMHS.

[3:27:15 PM](#)

GEORGE DALTON, JR., opined that SOA does not need more than one consultant and that one consultant should be good enough. He noted that Hoonah's handicap-accessible van used by seniors had to be sent to Juneau for repairs. He noted that this would not be possible without ferry service. He commented on the number of testifiers: "The more people we hear, the better." He thanked the committee members in Tlingit.

[3:28:41 PM](#)

KRISTIN MAHLEN identified herself as a Fairbanks resident who has fished out of Cordova for the past nine years. She echoed the sentiments of previous testifiers. She said coastal communities would be cut off from the rest of Alaska without the ferries. She said the proposal to eliminate AMHS is an economic and cultural attack on the residents of those communities and their way of life. She asked for AMHS to be fully funded and stressed that it should not be privatized, as that would cause it to become more expensive. She noted that many people who reside in coastal communities live off the land and do not make much money. She said AMHS keeps small communities connected and repeated that to shut it down would be an attack on those communities. She stated that some villages deal with social and economic issues that would be worsened by the removal of ferry service. She noted that AMHS is a public health service. She said that, as a commercial fisherwoman, she knows that many fishing operations utilize AMHS. She said those people spend money in all the places they go and explained that this supports the coastal economy. She pleaded for full funding for AMHS and repeated her stance against privatization.

[3:29:58 PM](#)

MARCELO QUINTO, President, Camp 70, Alaska Native Brotherhood, identified himself as a lifelong resident of Juneau. He noted that he was alive before AMHS. He stated that he agrees with previous testifiers but said what has not been said is that people his age remember what it was like before AMHS connected them to urban centers for medical care, school, and cultural relations. He opined that Governor Dunleavy's proposed budget would "[take] us back ... 60,70 years, where we would no longer have connections." He shared that "our children and our people" would lose contact with each other. He said SOA needs to keep the ferries running. He stated that the problem with AMHS relates to scheduling and successive years of budget cuts. He noted that ridership from Bellingham has dropped from approximately 800 to 500 per voyage.

[3:31:32 PM](#)

CHAIR STUTES thanked everybody who took the time and effort to testify. She thanked them as well for their patience and willingness to cut testimonies to one minute each. She thanked committee members for staying late and hearing testimony.

CHAIR STUTES closed public testimony on the issue of AMHS.

[3:32:15 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:32 p.m.