



March 12, 2025

House Labor and Commerce Committee

House Bill 75 Invited Testimony

Co-Chairs Fields and Hall and members of the House Labor and Commerce Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. For the record, my name is Kari Nore, and I serve as the director of external affairs for the Alaska Chamber. I testify today in support of House Bill 75, an Act relating to allowable absences for eligibility for a permanent fund dividend.

The Alaska Chamber is the state's largest statewide business advocacy organization. Our mission is to promote a healthy business environment in Alaska. The Chamber has more than 700 members and represents businesses of all sizes and industries from across the state, representing 58,000 Alaskan workers and \$4.6 billion in wages.

By vote of our diverse membership, the Alaska Chamber has a formal policy position to support clarifying vocational training absences for purposes of receiving PFD benefits. We support the enactment of clarifying changes to the PFD statute in order to assure Alaskans who are members of the uniformed services or those attending merchant marine training programs remain eligible to obtain their PFD, provided they have met all other eligibility criteria.

Since 1997, over 700 Alaskans have been recruited, trained, and placed in deep-sea maritime employment by attending the Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education. Many of these candidates were youth, Alaskan Natives, displaced workers, and veterans who attended an apprentice program paid for through a labor-management training trust fund. In so doing, management can be assured the individuals they hire to crew their vessels are thoroughly trained to USCG standards and uniformly meet their security, safety, and competency standards. Furthermore, by recruiting Alaskans for this apprenticeship opportunity companies in the Alaska maritime trade, like Alaska Tanker Company, Crowley Maritime, Matson Navigation, and TOTE Maritime Alaska, continue to meet their commitment to hire local. Denying PFD benefits to Alaskans, particularly younger Alaskans, while engaged in this required training, discourages them from considering this pathway as a career opportunity. The purpose for the local hire effort is for these individuals to be trained outside and to return to Alaska to spend their earned wages and enjoy their benefits on their time off.

In closing, the Chamber supports HB 75 and encourages swift passage of this straightforward and good for business bill. Thank you for considering the Alaska Chamber's comments.

Thank you,

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