



# UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

**Mailing Address:** PO Box 20229, Juneau AK 99802-0229

**Physical Address:** 410 Calhoun Ave Ste 101, Juneau AK 99801

**Phone:** (907) 586-2820 **Fax:** (907) 463-2545

**Email:** [ufa@ufafish.org](mailto:ufa@ufafish.org) **Website:** [www.ufafish.org](http://www.ufafish.org)

October 11, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Don Young  
United States House of Representatives  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dan Sullivan  
United States Senate  
702 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

## **RE: Support for H.R. 2079 and S.1323 - Young Fishermen's Development Act**

Dear Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, and Congressman Young,

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 34 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state and the federal waters off Alaska's coast.

The United Fisherman of Alaska strongly supports the Young Fishermen's Development Act (YFDA) introduced by prime sponsors Congressman Young (HR 2079) and Senator Sullivan (S. 1323). We applaud the Alaska's Congressional delegation's leadership in introducing and advocating for this important bill. These bills will establish the first national program to support young men and women entering the commercial fishing industry. The bipartisan, bicoastal bill, which would provide grants of up to \$200,000 (totaling \$2 million annually) through NOAA's Sea Grant Program, will provide support for essential training and education of the next generation of America's fishermen.

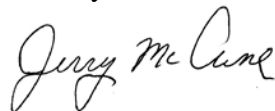
In 2015, the average age of Alaska fishery permit holders was 50 years, up nearly ten years since 1980. Aging trends are marked by a lack of young people entering the industry today. As the bulk of Alaska permit holders approach retirement age and rural fishing communities struggle to retain access to local fisheries, the lack of young people entering the fisheries has become a pressing concern for the state of Alaska and our coastal communities.

UFA member groups recognize the need to make sure we have a strong fleet of young fishermen ready to take over the important roles both on deck and in their communities. This includes providing them with the training and resources necessary to make smart business plans and to fish safely and sustainably.

Right now, our country lacks a coordinated, national effort to prepare and support young fishermen for a successful future. There are varying efforts in regions around the country that address the increasing challenges young fishermen face, but no cohesive effort at the federal level. It is in the best interests of the U.S. to continue sustainable domestic fisheries and to do so will require enabling new fishermen to take the reins of seafood harvesting operations. This program is modeled after the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program, housed within USDA. Because wild harvest fishermen cannot access those grant funds for training, we heartily support the YFDA to address that gap.

UFA looks forward to working with Alaska Congressional delegation to advance the Young Fishermen Development Act.

Thank you,



Jerry McCune  
President



Mark Vinsel  
Executive Administrator

#### MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers • Alaska Independent Tendermen's Association • Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association • Alaska Scallop Association  
Alaska Trollers Association • Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association • Armstrong Keta • At-sea Processors Association • Bristol Bay Fishermen's Association  
Bristol Bay Reserve • Cape Barnabas, Inc. • Concerned Area "M" Fishermen • Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association • Cordova District Fishermen United  
Douglas Island Pink and Chum • Freezer Longline Coalition • Golden King Crab Coalition • Groundfish Forum • Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association  
Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association • North Pacific Fisheries Association • Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association  
Petersburg Vessel Owners Association • Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation • Purse Seine Vessel Owner Association  
Seafood Producers Cooperative • Southeast Alaska Herring Conservation Alliance • Southeast Alaska Fisherman's Alliance  
Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association • Southeast Alaska Seiners • Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association  
United Cook Inlet Drift Association • United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters • Valdez Fisheries Development Association