



Chair Costello and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. For the record, my name is Tiffany Albert, and I serve as the Director of Communications for the Alaska Chamber. The Chamber is testifying today in support of SB233.

The Alaska Chamber was founded in 1953, and 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 sectors from across the state.

The Chamber has a formal policy position to support for 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 attending training outside at United States Department of Labor federally registered apprentice 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 SB233 and encourages swift passage of this straightforward and good for business bill.

Thank you for considering the Alaska Chamber's comments.



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