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LD 1552

I am testifying on LD 1552 due to not being able to attend in person. Our testimony is "Neither for or against" for this bill. The bill has good merit and good intentions as far as helping the fishermen to receive compensation for their efforts, such as developing new products or technologies that would be helpful to their industry. During this time, the fishermen have been the last ones to receive funding for trying to comply with all of the proposed rules that have been introduced over the past few years concerning whale protection gear, such as breakaways and specifically colored ropes.

This bill would help fishermen with new ideas that could be beneficial to the fishing industry. It would give them the ability to receive funding to help develop these ideas. Such products as alternative bait development or safety developments would be beneficial in our industry, but as with anything that could be a positive, there could also be a negative side. Unfortunately, this is what we're afraid of.

The part that is in question, is the rope less gear that has been proposed. To my understanding, this gear goes along with the folks that are trying to shut us down. There is always money that can be made by developing this gear.

The gear is definitely geographical, as far as specific areas around the islands that have never seen a whale. Smaller boats could never maneuver this gear either, so it makes it difficult for students and smaller boat owners. There is also the division of our own fishermen that feel threatened by testing this gear in a closed area with a special permit. There's feelings that if one can't fish there, then how can a special permit allow you to take lobsters from the same closed area. Again, the intent is meant well, but it will open up a lot of tensions among our own. It will also create problems with the dragger fishermen as well and be hard to enforce the law for the Marine Patrol.

There are other forms of research that can be worked with, and over time, it may work out in a positive manner. We have time to work on the research, which will come in due time. So let's put this funding where it will count the most to help all of us in this survival challenge. One again, we thank you for wanting to help the fishermen.