

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 3568

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM

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Hearing Date: March 29, 2021 1:00 PM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

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Fritz Jaenike

Texas Aquaculture Association

Cedar Park, TX

March 29, 2021

Texas House of Representatives

To: Members of the Culture, Recreation and Tourism Committee

RE: HB 3568 by Kacal

The Texas Aquaculture Association has been an advocate, collective voice and contact, and information source for Texas producers, regulators, and legislators for over 40 years. The TAA has worked to sponsor Texas legislation supportive to the aquaculture industry during that time and has worked with producers, TPWD and Legislators to sponsor HB 3568.

The Texas Parks & Wildlife Commercially Protected Finfish Rules were established to regulate sale of certain gamefish species in Texas. The Rules were established to prevent the sale of listed fish unlawfully taken from Texas waters, but to allow their sale if they are farm-raised or, for some species, if they are lawfully taken wild fish from out of state. In order for these fish to be sold by seafood wholesalers, retailers or restaurants, they are required to hold a Texas Finfish Import License and comply with strict labeling, packaging, invoicing and reporting requirements. While protective of the public resource, some of the Rules' provisions have unintentionally hindered, or in some cases prevented, commerce of legally produced product. This has negatively impacted Texas fish farmers, upstream suppliers, downstream purveyors, and even recreational lake managers. Ultimately, Texas consumers have suffered the most from this situation, as their access to safe, healthful, and locally-produced seafood products has been impeded. TAA has appreciated working with TPWD staff to remedy this situation by amending Parks and Wildlife Code to clearly exempt Texas farm-raised fish from the Rules throughout the chain of sale. These changes will benefit the State by opening new markets for Texas farm-raised fish, and will thereby provide opportunity for growth and increased employment in the aquaculture and related industries. Texas consumers will benefit by the increased availability of fish that are fresher and safer by virtue of being locally produced. Finally, since more than 80% of seafood consumed in this nation is imported, our nation's food security will be strengthened by the increase in domestically produced seafood.

Thank you,

Fritz Jaenike

Executive Director,

Texas Aquaculture Association

Fritz.jaenike@gmail.com