To the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to support state funding of Alaska Sea Grant' Marine Advisory Program in the 2011 budget. The Marine Advisory Program fills a unique role in each of the different towns that have offices. I have seen the work that Reid Brewer of Unalaska puts into his community presentations and coaching a National Ocean Sciences Bowl team, educating the next generation about the ocean. Here in Cordova, Torie Baker puts together an extensive and wide range of programs. She is one of the first people one goes to with a question about about fishing or marine education. MAP agents use their networking skills to bring people together, including experts in various fields, and help educate their communities about marine issues. This can take many forms, from presentations on direct marketing, to survival suit races, to net mending classes.

Less than a week ago I took a 10 hour AMSEA fishing vessel safety course that taught me a lot about cold water safety and rescue. Cordova's MAP agent Torie Baker scheduled, found locations for and helped teach the class. Without the flyers posted on the window of MAP's main street office I would not have known about this and other marine education programs.

There is a lot of talk about the proposed Governor’s Scholarship, in this period of surplus the state should be supporting university programs with proven records of outreach and education, at the same time it suggests new ones. Commercial Fishing is one of the largest economic sectors in Alaska's coastal communities. The communities with MAP agents are among the top ten ports by seafood value in the nation. The Marine Advisory Program is essential in educating the youth in these communities about the state of their oceans and fisheries, as well as giving practical safety and vocational training.

I encourage you to support the University of Alaska's request of $641,000 to help provide permanent funding for six of their Marine Advisory Program offices. Thank you for taking my comments into consideration.

Sincerely,

Ian Americus
Cordova High School Student