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May 1, 2017

Senate Committee on Business and Transportation
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for HB 2695

Chair Beyer and Members of the Senate Committee on Business and
Transportation:

I am the President of Boyer Towing Inc. headquartered in Ketchikan, Alaska. Boyer operates a fleet of ocean tugs and barges in Pacific coast cargo service and is heavily engaged in transporting logs between points in Alaska, Washington, Oregon and British Columbia. Boyer tugboats make frequent calls into Coos Bay, particularly in log barging from British Columbia.

It takes Boyer's tug masters and mates years of experience in order to qualify for the federal licenses permitting them to operate tugboats in U.S. coastwise trade. Boyer's masters and mates have taken barges across the Coos Bay bar countless times over the past twenty years when transporting forest products between Coos Bay and other ports in Washington and British Columbia. In my experience, the Coos Bay Pilots have never raised concerns of safety over the crewing and licensing qualifications of Boyer's Coast Guard licensed masters and mates.

In April, 2015 the Coos Bay Pilots got the Oregon Board of Maritime Pilots (OBMP) to change a legal interpretation. Our tugs coming from B.C. were suddenly required to take a Coos Bay pilot, even though the tugs had cleared customs in Washington. The OBMP reversed this erroneous interpretation in September, 2016, but by then the Coos Bay Pilots had encouraged U.S. Customs to change customs clearing practices at Washington ports, increasing customs clearing costs for tugs and barges. HB 2695 simply allows U.S. tugs to do what they have done since forest products imports from B.C. started over 30 years ago, enter Coos Bay without having to incur the unnecessary expense of taking a state pilot.

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There is no safety related difference between U.S. tugs and barges transporting forest products to Coos Bay from British Columbia, and those same U.S. tugs transporting forest products to Coos Bay from other places in Alaska, Oregon or Washington. I understand that the Coos Bay Pilots are misrepresenting HB 2695, by claiming it lowers safety. HB 2695 does not change existing Coast Guard requirements for tug operators to have federal licenses and local navigating experience. These Coast Guard required licenses are specific to tugs and barges. Comparing these requirements to those of state or federal pilots licensed to pilot other types of vessels, like tankers, is misleading. Requiring these same tug masters to take a state pilot when they are dispatched on a trip from B.C. just increases shipping costs.

Imposing expensive pilotage fees on this limited segment of log and woodchip barging into Coos Bay does not benefit the public. But HB 2695 will, by making Oregon forest products manufacturers and the tug and barge industry serving Coos Bay more cost competitive.

Boyer Towing Inc. urges all Oregon legislators to support HB 2695.

Very truly yours,



Kent Halvorsen
President
Boyer Towing Inc.