

January 16, 2020

Visitor Industry Task Force:

Thank you for being on the task force and trying to find solutions that work for everyone in our community, it is a difficult task.

I was born and raised in Juneau. My first real job was in tourism. I still remember prepping for the interview and how nervous I was during it! Luckily, I got the job. ☺ Working is an essential part of life. Tourism gave me the opportunity to learn essential foundational work skills. These skills helped me save money to buy a car, supported me through college, and on through my future career. I feel grateful for the opportunity to work for local businesses that were willing to hire and train a high school kid like me; this is a very unique community work environment. After completing my Masters in Social Work, I moved back to earn my clinical license. I've worked in Juneau's nonprofit sector for 11 years – it's basically been my only other job in Juneau. Since moving back, I met my husband and we recently started a family. I've re-made Juneau my home.

I've been fortunate and adventurous enough to travel all over the world and I believe that we are lucky to live in such a beautiful town. Juneau is special. I also know that in order to keep people around, we need a thriving economy. Juneau is an expensive place to live and although the nonprofit sector does important work, it is not known for its generous wages. There are a few ways to make a decent living here – mining, government, fishing and tourism are at the top of the list. Many state jobs are being moved out of Juneau. Fishing is not as reliable as it once was. There is a lot of talk about limiting tourism. It will be difficult for people to continue to make a living in Juneau if our major industries continue to be limited. I hear people saying that limiting visitors won't hurt the industry, it may seem that way, but this simply isn't true. Have you ever owned a small business? It is hard for small local businesses to "make it." Reducing these numbers would be a huge barrier to their success.

I know there is a lot of discussion about the negative environmental impacts & capacity for Juneau. I am a vegan and a distance runner so the environment and the outdoors are very important to me. I choose everyday to live a sustainable lifestyle; I am raising my daughter this way. As I follow conversations, it seems like a lot of the solutions I hear are limiting. I wonder why we are coming up with so many solutions that limit us instead of using tourism to benefit us. We are lucky enough to live in a place that people want to visit, why don't we try to capitalize on that opportunity? If we're worried about the environmental effects of the cruise ships, let's look into shore power. If we're worried about capacity, let's think creatively and work with businesses and the cruise industry to set up more shore excursions so people are getting out to explore our lands. I am on the trails often. I admit there are some trails I avoid in the summer because I know they will be busier than others. I also

recognize there are plenty of other trails for me to use. If I want to access the busier trails, I do. I can also choose to do so when I know there will be less people on them. Living here affords me the flexibility and opportunity to do that.

Alaska is remote and difficult to access. Not everyone can afford to fly up and create their own vacation. With the limited ferry service, it is even more difficult to experience Alaska. Additionally, people have physical limitations that may prevent them from traveling by air. Cruise ships offer an affordable, safe and convenient way for people to fulfill their lifelong dream to see Alaska. On a larger scale, the footprint of visitors coming by cruise ship is far less than if they were flying from port to port. Let's not make it harder for people to visit our beautiful town. I challenge us to be creative in our solutions. I encourage us to share our beautiful city with those who want to visit and, figure out how to benefit us in the process.

Thank you for your efforts to support Juneau in continuing to be a place where people want to live and visit. We're lucky to have both.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hilary Young". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the "y" that extends to the right.

Hilary Young