

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 9:54 AM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: House Bill 55

Dear Representative Josephson,

My name is Steven Butts and I am a Firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department.

I am writing you all to voice support of House Bill 55 and requesting that you continue to push it through the legislative process. The Tier IV program has been proven to be an inadequate system for the public safety sector. I believe this because it has cost the state money to train new employees just for them to leave the state and use that training to serve other communities that offer more competitive retirement plans.

I understand that this bill comes with a cost, but stopping the continual loss of good employees that the state has paid to train is worth that cost.

Thank you very much for your time.

-Steven Butts

From: Matt Fellman [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 8:52 PM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB55

Representative Andy Josephson

I'm writing to you today in regards to HB55 and the importance of it passing in the near future. As someone who has worked as an Alaskan firefighter over the last several years, I have become very familiar and therefore concerned regarding my future. Alaska is where I was born, raised, and a place that I love to call home. However, even though Alaska is dear to my heart I would be lying if I said that I haven't actively been searching and putting applications into departments within the lower 48 to work for the extended future. The fact is that Alaska's public safety retirement in comparison to much of America's Northwest is essentially non-existent. Although I hate thinking about it, there will come a day that my body, mind, and ability to perform as a firefighter/paramedic will come to an end sooner than my ability to retire will. The statistics speak for themselves as public safety employees are abandoning Alaska's retirement to greener pastures and I have seen this firsthand during my career in Alaska. Unless something is changed in the near future, I will be forced to look out for my best interest and hop on that same wagon out of town. I hope that you will consider placing your support into the passing of HB55 and make an enormous step in giving back to the public safety employees of Alaska.

Thank you,

Matt Fellman- Anchorage Resident

[REDACTED]

From: Eric Gallagher [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 9:33 PM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: house bill 55

Representative Andy Josephson,

My name is Eric Gallagher and I am an 10-year member of Anchorage Fire Department, serving as a firefighter/paramedic I am writing today in support of House Bill 55.

One thing that has been of concern in my short career is the idea of long-term financial security. Before joining AFD I had no training or encouragement in matters of financial planning. The Local 1264 and State Fire Association have been phenomenal about opening our eyes to the reality of a defined contribution system. They have taught us that in order for a chance at having the ability to retire we have few options. People are either having to max out multiple retirement accounts or are investing their money aggressively elsewhere (financial, housing, etc.). Given the fact that these investments are a risk and their production unknown, many of us are asking what else we can do to set ourselves up for long-term financial security.

At this time more than half of the Anchorage Fire Department falls into Tier 4 retirement. As we become increasingly aware of the lack of financial security in the current system there are many of us that feel led to begin looking at outside opportunities that can provide that security. I believe that the exodus of public safety employees can be mitigated with the current House Bill 55. I've lived in Alaska nearly all of my life and working for AFD is my dream job, but reality is that the current retirement system is not competitive enough to keep me here. Longevity in our line of work is always a huge question mark and I need to do what's best for my future and establish long-term security.

I sincerely thank you for taking the time to read my letter. Regards,

Eric Gallagher

[REDACTED]

From: grant kopplin [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 9:44 PM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: Support for HB 55

Representative Andy Josephson,

I am Grant Kopplin and I am writing in support of HB 55. I currently work for the Anchorage Fire Department and have seen a lot of good first responders come and go due to the lack of a defined benefit retirement plan. I have personally looked for other career opportunities in other states that offer a more competitive retirement plan. not because I want to leave my current job, but because it would be in the best interest for me and my families future. The Tier IV retirement plan has been proven time and time again to be an inadequate retirement system for public safety employees. The state and municipalities across the state are losing money by training public safety employees and then seeing them leave the state for a better retirement plan. We are no longer competitive in recruiting quality employees that will stay around for a full career. Tier IV requires a solution for public safety employees, and HB 55 is just that. HB 55 is a plan built with reasonable costs and reasonable risk, that incorporates the best practices of the most successful pension plans in the county. This is the opportunity to fix the Tier IV once and for all and ensure that we recruit and retain quality first responders in our state. Thank you for your time and support.

-Very Respectfully, Grant Kopplin

From: james johnstone [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 11:21 AM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: Please support HB 55

Dear representative,

My name is James Johnstone and I write to you today to express my support for HB 55. I currently work as a Firefighter for the Anchorage fire department and know firsthand the shortcomings of our current retirement system. As the generations before me retire around me with a pension and healthcare under the tier 2 and 3 systems I will retire with neither under tier 4. Although this will not solve all the shortcomings of tier 4 it is a crucial first step for the individuals that risk their lives every day for the betterment of society. As a 27-year-old who will be eligible to retire at 50 I would still have to wait 15 years to gain Medicare or continue in a career that is incredibly taxing on the mind and body. Many individuals before me have seen this outcome and have decided to leave the department and the state in search of a better retirement. One such individual was in my academy class just 2 years ago and left for another department just weeks after having AFD pay for his paramedics and fire training. This is costly to the municipality and the state by being forced to train new people just to lose them to more competitive departments. HB 55 is a fix to a broken system that would save money by retaining the people they have paid so much to train.

Although there is a cost to this bill the benefits will far outweigh them. By using the strategies learned by other pensions that are successful we can make this an efficient and worth while accomplishment.

Thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

James Johnstone

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 12:38 PM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: Support for HB55

Representative Johnson,

My name is Catlin Clark and I am a Firefighter/EMT with the Anchorage Fire Department. I am writing to you today in support of House Bill 55. HB 55 is very important to me, my coworkers, my friends, and my family. I also believe that passing HB 55 is in the best interest of our community, citizens, and State.

Prior to working for the Anchorage Fire Department, I worked in the legal field. It took some concentrated effort and time to obtain my position here with AFD. While working full-time, I completed my bachelor's degree at UAA, then obtained EMT-I and Firefighter-I certifications while volunteering for the Girdwood Fire Department. After testing two times, I now enjoy working as a career Firefighter and EMS professional. AFD affords me so many opportunities, specifically for my personal growth and development.

My job is dynamic and rewarding. I grew up here in Anchorage, so having the opportunity to help my community in this way is truly special. With all of the positives that this position affords, there are some undeniable challenges as well. Being a Firefighter/EMS is physically and mentally taxing. I am new to this career and intend to work for many years to come, but I do know that eventually, my tenure will come to an end. And while I am saving for retirement, the options available to someone like me provide a dim outlook. Currently, a defined benefit plan is not available, and I am not eligible for Social Security benefits. Anchorage Alaska is my lifelong home, and I do not want to change that. However, it is undeniable that there are departments elsewhere with pension plans and overall, more long-term security for their workforce.

All of the knowledge and skills that I have developed over the last few years have been thanks to public safety professionals within the State of Alaska. I am thankful that I am a part of an organization that makes training and professional development a top priority. And while everyone in this field invests personally in training to some degree, the bulk of these investments are on the shoulders of our community. Training is expensive, and it is wholly necessary. Having trained and seasoned individuals on scene makes all the difference in any emergency. Both as a public safety professional, and a member of the public, retention of qualified

and skilled professionals seems of utmost importance to me, and I think HB55 is the solution. While HB55 comes with costs, the savings long-term are well worth it.

I encourage you to support House Bill 55, and in turn, support the first responders of the State of Alaska.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Catlin Clark

From: Mark Bundy [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 8:59 AM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: please support HB 55

My name is Mark Bundy and I work for the Anchorage Fire Department. I was hired prior to Tier 4, but I am writing to ask for your support for moving forward with House Bill 55. This is important because I have seen how this affects our department. There is no incentive for our best new employees to stay in Alaska when they have the skills and the motivation to get trained here in our state, and then move to a different state that has a slightly better retirement. I believe HB 55 will help Alaska recruit and retain our own highest quality citizens that would love to continue life in this great state. We have already had fantastic employees leave due to this after 1 or 2 years and I don't see any reason for it not to continue or increase in the coming years. Please support HB 55.

Thank you all,
Mark Bundy

From: Lane Wraith [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 18, 2021 4:05 PM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 55

Dear Sir:

Thank you so much for your work on this bill. I am a Tier 4 employee and work as an Alaska State Trooper. I have a little over 11 years on and the hope of this bill (and previously HB 79) has kept me from searching for other employment. I will not waste your time, but I have one tweak I ask you to consider:

I think it is really important to amend the "buy in" of this bill to the balance of the employee's Pers account instead of the calculation in the bill. Doing a quick and dirty calculation, and checking with another Trooper as well, it appears that there would be a significant cost owed by the average employee over the average person's Pers account. I think this would keep a lot of people from joining. Under section 36 (e) (page 21)

(e) If the value actuarially calculated under (c) of this section is insufficient to pay for service credit equal to the employee's actual service, the administrator shall allow the employee the option of purchasing any indebtedness up to the amount needed to eliminate the insufficiency;

I would ask for an amendment changing this to if a Tier 4 employee wished to join, they would contribute not more than their Pers balance. They would keep their SBS (if applicable) and Def. Comp. This way, they are not penalized for having been in Tier 4. I realize that the state has not been putting in the same amount, but the employees have been contributing their 8%. I do understand that we would probably have to contribute 10% from future paychecks to keep this fully funded, and I don't think very many people would have a problem with that. I think coming up with 20-50K to opt in may be a deal killer and not possible for many. This is potentially a large cost for an individual, but a small cost for the state. I believe the current legislature, if in favor of this bill, would not change their vote based on this amendment.

Again thank you for your support on this. I am very appreciative of our legislature and the support given to law enforcement.

Thank you,
Lane Wraith
[REDACTED]

From: Jennifer Kach [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 23, 2021 3:11 PM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: Please Support HB55

Representative Josephson,

Hello, my name is Jennifer Kach, and I am a firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department. I am encouraging you to pass House Bill 55, so that it may continue to move through the legislative process. This bill is a possible solution to the inadequate retirement system the Anchorage Fire Department currently offers. Our state, and the AFD, have suffered because we do not offer our first responders an acceptable retirement plan; therefore, we cannot compete with other departments around the nation. I have seen several great employees leave because they don't feel able to provide for their families in the future and I have met great candidates who have passed up a job offer with the AFD for a job that offered a more secure retirement plan.

On a personal note, I worked for the Anchorage School District teaching health to elementary students for the first ten years of my career. I was disappointed to begin this job with a Tier III retirement plan (which is the equivalent to Tier IV in the fire department). After serving my community as an educator for many years I decided I was ready for a change. I worked very hard and finally achieved my goal to become a firefighter. The only down side was that my retirement plan was even worse than before! I have major concerns about my financial situation once I reach retirement age and have dedicated many hours of my personal time towards my budgeting and investing education. The outlook does not look positive and I may be forced to pursue other career options. Please support House Bill 55, so that I do not have to change my career yet again, in pursuit of a reasonable and secure retirement.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Kach

From: Patrick Gregg [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 26, 2021 1:08 PM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: House Bill 55

Dear Representative Josephson,

First and foremost, thank you for all your hard work and support in getting House Bill 55 this far!!!

My name is Patrick Gregg. I live in Anchorage with my wife Devin and we have raised 3 children here. I've been a firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department for over 22 years; the last 14 of which have been as a Fire Captain.

I'm writing to you today to express my grave concern about the inadequacies of the current Tier IV retirement system that all Public Safety employees, hired since 2007, are members of. The Tier IV plan is incredibly flawed. As a result, recruitment and retention of Public Safety Employees is down. House Bill 55 goes a long way towards fixing that.

I'm one of the lucky ones that hired on in 1999 so I am a member of Tier III which provides at least some level of financial security for my wife and I when I retire one day. My 2 oldest sons are not so lucky. One is a firefighter here with AFD. The other is a firefighter with the FFD in Fairbanks. Both are members of Tier IV which provides absolutely no financial security for their retirement futures.

They are both hard working, disciplined young men who are aggressively contributing, on their own, to other retirement account options but even with that, they WILL NOT have enough to live on and provide for their families in retirement. As a result, there is a high likelihood that they will both eventually seek positions with other departments outside the State of Alaska. There are many fire departments in the Northwest that regularly offer lateral transfers from one department to another. And many of them are still offering a defined benefit retirement plan. Since 2007 we have started losing people to these lateral transfers at an alarming rate and it will only increase unless Tier IV is replaced with something that can offer some financial security. HB 55 is a good start towards correcting that in a practical way which is good for both the State of Alaska as well as the hard working people who serve it.

The bottom line is this. When I hired on with the AFD it was not uncommon to be testing against 2000-3000 people. These days we are lucky if we receive 500 applications and the common thing that you will hear from people is that the Tier IV retirement system is to blame.

Please continue to support House Bill 55 and encourage your colleagues to do the same. The cost to the State of Alaska in supporting this bill will be far less than if we do nothing at all.

Sincerely,

Patrick R Gregg

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Kevin Johnson [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 24, 2021 11:39 PM
To: Rep. Bart LeBon <Rep.Bart.Lebon@akleg.gov>
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>; Allan Heineken <AHeineken@fairbanks.us>
Subject: HB 55

Dear Representative LeBon,

My name is Kevin Johnson. I am a Firefighter/Paramedic for the City of Fairbanks. I am a sixth generation Alaskan and have no plans to leave this state. However with the current situation of the PERS retirement system I may be forced to leave the state I love. Multiple models show that the current success rate of me having a successful retirement under Tier 4 is six percent. That is a ninety-four percent failure rate. With that kind of projection I have no hope of staying in my home state. House Bill 55 gives us a new start. We would have a stable retirement again that has shown projections of being stable throughout major economic fluctuation. This far surpasses the mess that is Tier 4. This would allow me to settle down, start a family, and have a life here in this great state. Thank your for taking the time to read this. Yours sincerely,
Kevin Johnson

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Sam Bratten
Firefighter/EMT Fairbanks FD
3/25/2021

House Bill 55

Hello, my name is Sam Bratten and I am a firefighter with the Fairbanks Fire Department. I have grown up in Fairbanks since birth and I have always considered it to be my home despite traveling a lot when I was younger for various hockey teams. I am writing to show my support for House Bill 55 and I hope that this letter will help represent the others who will be positively affected by its passing.

This bill is important to me because it will drastically affect how my future family and I will enjoy the retirement I earn from serving the community of Fairbanks. The Tier IV system has proven to be inadequate in allowing people to live comfortably after working until their required age. A switch to defined benefits has shown to be a superior system compared to a defined contribution plan. The Fairbanks Fire Department has also dropped a significant number of applicants and potential recruit

firefighters which can be attributed to this system and the potentially difficult future that is associated with Tier IV, and I would like to help change that aspect to retain more employees until retirement.

I have always considered Fairbanks my home and I consider the community to be my family because I have lived around them for the past 26 years. With the passing of this bill and the change of culture that would be associated with it, I know that I would be able to stay and earn a good living after committing my working years to the community of Fairbanks. I hope this letter finds you well and that it shows my full support for passing House Bill 55.

Sincerely,
Sam Bratten

From: Kelley Russell [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, March 27, 2021 10:09 PM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 55 - Letter of Support

Representative Andy Josephson,

My name is Dr. Kelley Russell and I am writing you in ardent support of House Bill 55, which is focuses on addressing the public safety retirement crisis we have in Alaska. I am a graduate of the University of Alaska Anchorage's Doctoral Program in Clinical Community Psychology and am employed as a clinical psychologist, serving the mental and behavioral health needs of Alaskan Veterans. I am also married to a firefighter, Jayson Russell, who is a firefighter/paramedic (in training) in the Anchorage Fire Department and is very involved in several aspects of the organization, including serving on the Fallen Firefighters Committee, and being one of the mentors on the local Fire Explorers Post for youth interested in the Fire Service.

I urge you to move this bill forward in the legislative process. I have seen so many fire service professionals leave the state, especially in the past few years, discussing how although they love Alaska, it is impossible for them to stay because every other state has a better retirement/benefits system for public safety professionals than Alaska. My own husband, who has dreamed of being an Anchorage Firefighter since he was 6 years old, has had discussion with me about how we might need to consider moving within the near future if the state does not change to offer the same support that is offered to his fellow firefighters in other states.

I throw my support behind this bill for several reasons. First, as a community member, I believe the service and sacrifice of our emergency medical professionals deserves to be honored. We need to take care of the people who take care of us. Also as a community member, I am concerned about having an adequate workforce to provide care in an emergency. In a geographically isolated place that has some of the highest rates of traumatic experiences (suicide, domestic violence, etc.), we need to have good emergency response providers, and numerous ones at that. Without providing

competitive benefits, it will be difficult if not impossible to provide the needed workforce to staff the front lines of these traumas. Beyond just losing these valuable community members, we also will lose the contributions of their family members. So many spouses of firefighters work in critical workforce sectors such as education/teaching, medical and mental health. We need these professionals to stay in our state as well.

As a mental health professional, I have heard the stories of survivors of various traumatic events whose suffering has been made easier by having rapid and quality care by emergency response teams. Everyone deserves someone who is enthusiastic about their job, well trained and focused to be there to provide care to them on one of the worst days of their lives. If we have providers who are dissatisfied and feel unsupported by the community that they offer their lives and physical and mental health for, those patients are not going to get as quality of care as they deserve. Those negative mental health effects can reverberate through generations.

Personally, as an Alaskan who loves this state, I do not want to leave but very likely will be forced to move with my husband if something is not changed in providing better retirement for public safety. I have spent almost my whole life here, and got my graduate education in this state so I could receive specialized training in addressing the mental health needs of Alaska. I want to serve Alaskans as a psychologist and I want Jayson to be on the front lines as a firefighter and hopeful soon to be paramedic. I want our children to grow up here, experiencing the vibrant individuality of Alaska, enjoying and protecting the beauty of its lands.

As a community member, mental health professional, spouse of a firefighter and enthusiastic Alaskan, I urge and encourage you to move House Bill 55 forward in the legislative process. Please take these next steps to protect our public safety professionals, our emergency medical response system and our amazing state. Thank you so much for your thoughtful consideration, and your dedication to bettering Alaska.

Thank you,
Kelley Russell, Ph.D

From: Jayson Russell [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, March 27, 2021 10:26 PM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: Letter of Support for HB 55

House Finance Committee,

My name is Jayson Russell, and I am a firefighter/EMT with the Anchorage Fire Department, currently working on my paramedic checkoffs with the department. I am writing to you in support of House Bill 55. It is hard to write to you how important this bill is in such few words, and on an email, but please hear me out. I grew up here in Anchorage, and I knew from when I was about 6 years old I wanted to be a firefighter. I never took the time to think about what working somewhere outside of Alaska would

look like, because this has always been home. I'm a third generation Alaskan, and my wife is a second, with the thought of raising our children here.

But the conversation of long-term finances comes into play here - "can we really afford to live here for the next 30+ years?" It's hard to speak with my good friends - whom I went to the University Fire Department (UFD) with (in Fairbanks) - while they talk about leaving state and the good things they have going for them now. They work less (by 33%), make slightly less (with less cost of living) and have a pension!

I urge you all as the house finance committee members to please move this bill forward. The tier IV system has been shown to be much less being a defined contribution opposed to a defined benefits plan, and we are wasting money right now. I see my friends moving onto other states like Washington and Idaho, and there will be an increase in even more people leaving if nothing is done. In fact, I myself have been talking to my wife about it more and more, even though I was just hired on a few years ago the AFD. It's not that I don't love my position here in Anchorage, but I am trying to be wise about the best possible route for me and my family. For us, it's just talk as of right now. But when I get vested after five years, if the opportunity for a pension - or at least something that looks like a pension - isn't on the table, then my family and I could very much be leaving.

Please consider voting for this bill. My home and my heart is here in Alaska, and it took me nearly ten years to get on with the AFD. It's sad for me personally to think of a future where I'm not here, but I have to put my family first. Thank you.

- Jayson Russell

From: Russ Dennis [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2021 5:20 PM
To: myersalaska@outlook.com; Sen. Click Bishop <Sen.Click.Bishop@akleg.gov>; Grier.Hopkins@akleg.gov; Adam.Wool@akleg.gov; Rep. Bart LeBon <Rep.Bart.Lebon@akleg.gov>; Rep. Steve Thompson <Rep.Steve.Thompson@akleg.gov>; Rep. Mike Prax <Rep.Mike.Prax@akleg.gov>
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>; William W. Rockwell <WRockwell@fairbanks.us>
Subject: HB55

Senators and Representatives,

I am a firefighter/paramedic at Fairbanks City Fire Department and I am writing to urge you to take action on House Bill 55, replace a broken retirement system, keep Alaskan's serving Alaskan's, and provide Alaskan public workers with a viable retirement plan. Tier IV is a bad joke that negatively impacts life and property of the Fairbanksians we serve. We are hemorrhaging firefighters and police officers, and HB 55 is the solution.

Sincerely,
Russell Dennis

Firefighter/Paramedic
Fairbanks City Fire Department.

From: William W. Rockwell [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2021 5:27 PM
To: Russ Dennis <russ.e.dennis@gmail.com>; myersalaska@outlook.com; Sen. Click Bishop <Sen.Click.Bishop@akleg.gov>; Grier.Hopkins@akleg.gov; Adam.Wool@akleg.gov; Rep. Bart LeBon <Rep.Bart.Lebon@akleg.gov>; Rep. Steve Thompson <Rep.Steve.Thompson@akleg.gov>; Rep. Mike Prax <Rep.Mike.Prax@akleg.gov>
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: RE: HB55

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Senators and Representatives,

I am a Captain /paramedic at Fairbanks Fire Department and I am writing to urge you to take action on House Bill 55, replace a broken retirement system, keep Alaskan's serving Alaskan's, and provide Alaskan public workers with a viable retirement plan. Tier Iv is ineffective. We cannot keep firefighters and police officers in our departments with a fix now, and HB 55 is the solution.

Bill "Rocky" Rockwell
Capt / Paramedic
Fairbanks Fire Dept
[REDACTED]

From: Dalton Gregg [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 2, 2021 1:05 AM
To: Rep. Steve Thompson <Rep.Steve.Thompson@akleg.gov>
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>; WRockwell@fairbanks.us
Subject: Support of House Bill 55

Dear Representative Thompson,

My name is Dalton Gregg. I am a firefighter with the Fairbanks Fire Department and I am one of many Tier IV members who are gravely concerned with the current retirement system in Alaska.

From as far back as I can remember, I have always wanted to be a firefighter. My father has been working for the Anchorage Fire Department for over 22 years now and my brother was lucky enough to be able to join him just over 8 years ago. It is my dream and desire to be able to work with my father and my brother one day, but the Tier IV retirement system is stopping me from committing to that dream. I know that I will be unable to support myself and my family when I retire, even with the other retirement accounts I am contributing to on my own. That is why HB 55 is so important to me.

Time and time again I have watched people join the Fairbanks Fire Department and other departments I have worked for, stay for a year or less and receive training, and take a job in the lower 48s with a defined benefits retirement plan or some other system that will support them and their families in retirement.

I know 20 years ago, it wasn't uncommon for fire departments in Alaska to receive thousands of applications in a testing process. Now, we are lucky if we receive enough applicants to even HOLD a testing process.

The bottom line is Tier IV is bad for the state, bad for departments, and bad for the citizens. It causes an increased cost to constantly train new members and it leaves the citizens vulnerable due to lack of experience.

Tier IV requires a solution and HB 55 is that solution.

Sincerely,
Dalton R Gregg

[REDACTED]

From: Zach Rittel [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, April 3, 2021 10:37 PM
To: Rep. Mike Cronk <Rep.Mike.Cronk@akleg.gov>
Subject: Support of HB55

Representative Cronk,

I am writing in hopes that you will support HB 55, Peace Officer and Firefighter Retirement benefits.

I am currently employed at the City of Fairbanks as a Captain with the Fire Department. A job that I greatly enjoy and strive to provide an extraordinary service to the community. Unfortunately the current retirement system, that was put in place in 2006, has changed the nature of the Fire Department and the service we are able to provide. Since the implementation of Tier IV our employee retention has plummeted and we are constantly losing dedicated and skilled firefighters to out of state jobs. Half of the department is under 3 years on the job, this has significant effects in familiarity, area knowledge, operations experience and makes everything we do more hazardous and less effective. A 7 year employee on my shift just left for Bellingham, Washington and a 5 year employee is currently testing with Tacoma, Washington. They were both climbing the promotion ladder and cite lack of a defined benefit retirement as their primary reason for leaving.

Implementing the HB 55 plan would change my retirement from a savings account to a pension. It has several safeguards to avoid the costs that were included in the previous defined benefit plans. This would dramatically affect employee retention and the pool for initial hiring. Currently many of the departments in the interior of Alaska have an experience gap and are having difficulty hiring qualified and seasoned officers, the people making life and death decisions. I believe that this bill would help change that trend and contribute to stopping the population loss that the state is seeing.

This is the single most important issue to me and your support for this bill would gain you my support.

Please contact me if you have any questions,
Zachary Rittel

Nick Clark
PO Box 80151
Fairbanks, AK 99708

Representative Josephson
Alaska State Legislator
State Capital Room 502
Juneau, AK 99801

Representative Josephson,

I am writing today in support of HB 55, Peace Officer/Firefighter Retire Benefits.

I am a 9-year Firefighter/Paramedic with the City of Fairbanks Fire Department. I have now wrote a letter(s) for each year of my service in Alaska requesting we move forward with a new system. I have seen first hand the struggles that tier 4 has caused to public servants. FFD has turned into a short-term training department for good people to work their resumes and move on. We hire some amazing people that would spend their career at FFD if we had a retirement system that provided some dignity when it came time to retire. The DC Tier 4 system is not going to meet the satisfactory mark for our members.

Last I checked, on average, our members have a 27% chance of meeting the bar for income in retirement with DC system. I am afraid the FFD members are going to be well below this mark. There is not a better time to act than now as we come out of some of the hardest times our members have seen.

HB 55 is a proven plan that will get us closer to the dignity deserved in retirement. Though I am not pleased it leaves out important aspects such as healthcare, I understand this is the sacrifice we must make so this plan will survive generations to come. I support HB 55 and I urge the legislature to move this bill through and to the governor's desk by the end of session.

With respect,

Nick Clark
Fairbanks Firefighter