From: Andrew Fowler
To: Rep. Laddie Shaw
Subject: HB22
Date: Sunday, March 5, 2023 9:08:33 AM

My name is Andrew Fowler, I am a firefighter at the Fairbanks Fire Department. I have worked there for 18 years. I am the last person that was hired under tier 3. There are 3 employees senior to me that I have had the pleasure to spend these last 18 years working with and and learning from. They are all eligible to retire in the next year and will probably do so. Throughout my career, I have had many mentors with loads of experience. Their experience came simply from years on the job. That's what the Fairbanks Fire Department used to be. It was a place where people would spend their careers. Since Tier 4 was implemented, it has become a "layover". Our young applicants get hired fairly easily because not many apply. They get hired, we order all of their gear, we train them, and then "poof", they are gone. Virtually all of our new hires are testing and other departments that have better retirement options. They stick with us only until they get that offer. I believe the average is 2 years. This has created a huge experience deficit.

To put things in perspective, I was promoted to Captain when I had worked here for 15 years. This, from my experience, was a normal career path trajectory. In those 15 years you gain a lot of knowledge and maturity needed to be a leader. The most recent captain promotion happened a few months ago. That person had been working here for 5 years. Out of 47 employees, 25 of them have worked here for 2 years or less. 33 out of 47 have worked here for less than 5 years.

People aren't leaving because they don't enjoy the job, they are leaving because tier 4 leaves them feeling very unsecure about their future. Tier 5 gives people motivation to stay. It keeps the high quality people in Alaska. It also has built in safe guards to prevent a repeat of tier 4's issues.

Please make HB22 a priority. It's a very important issue.

Thanks,
Andrew Fowler