From: Catlin Clark
To: Rep. Laddie Shaw
Subject: HB22 Letter
Date: Sunday, March 5, 2023 2:03:38 PM

Dear Representative Shaw,

My name is Catlin Clark and I am a Firefighter/EMT with the Anchorage Fire Department. I am also an Anchorage resident residing in Southeast Anchorage, District 12F. I am writing to you today in support of House Bill 22. HB22 is very important to me, my coworkers, my friends, and my family. I also believe that passing HB22 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 recruitment efforts, 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 HB22 is the solution. While HB22 comes with costs, the savings long-term are well worth it.

I encourage you to support House Bill 22, and in turn, support the first responders of the State of Alaska.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Catlin Clark