



## ALASKA FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

One Sealaska Plaza, Suite 200, Juneau, Alaska 99801

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Representative Kopp  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 216  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: Alaska Public Employee Retirement System & HB79

Dear REPRESENTATIVE Kopp,

Thank you for your support on HB79. The Alaska Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) is an organization that represents the Fire Chiefs across Alaska. The following is our Mission: Serving the people of the State of Alaska by influencing fire and emergency service programs and legislation; advancing fire and emergency services professionals; and providing for the safety and well-being of firefighters and their communities through Passion, Service, and Outreach.

A large part of what we do is watching for legislation that will affect fire department's statewide. As Fire Chiefs we are all concerned with the recruitment and retention that is affecting many departments in the state. Returning to a "Defined Benefit" retirement system will help with both retention and recruitment.

Currently several states are using Alaska as a recruiting zone by offering lateral hires for fire fighters with experience. They will bring them on at a higher pay and their states have a defined benefit retirement program. This is very attractive to many of the younger fire fighters. Throughout the state we are seeing our young fire fighters take advantage of these transfers.

We are in need of something to offer new recruits that they cannot get somewhere else. The defined benefit retirement system not only is attractive to new recruits, it will assist with keeping current employees in Alaska. With the current Tier IV system, employees are able to take their money with them out of state when they leave. The defined benefit program does not allow that. It also gives them a light at the end of the tunnel. They can look to the future and count on a time they can retire and have a known income that will be available to them. The current retirement system does not provide this.

We would like to thank you again for your support of fire fighters across the State of Alaska, and all your service to State of Alaska.

If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [jstyers@fairbanks.us](mailto:jstyers@fairbanks.us) or at (907)450-6604.

V/r

James N. Styers  
1st Vice President  
Alaska Fire Chiefs Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James N. Styers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "James N." on the top line and "Styers" on the bottom line.



## Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police

Representative Kopp  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 216  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

March 20, 2019

RE: Alaska Public Employee Retirement System & HB79

Dear REPRESENTATIVES KOPP, Shaw, LeDoux, Fields, Spuhnholz,

The Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police is an organization that represents the collective needs of many communities in Alaska. We are writing this letter in strong support of HB79 which amends the Alaska Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) to return ALL Police Officers/Troopers, state wide, to a defined-benefit pension system. This change will help with the recruitment of new applicants, retain officers and Troopers, and will ensure Alaska residents have adequately staffed law enforcement agencies to mitigate the concerns for public safety.

Over the past many years the Department of Public Safety AND local Police Departments in Alaska have been struggling to build and maintain their forces. During this process we have faced an uphill battle to recruit new applicants and retain extremely qualified Officers and Troopers. A lot of this is due to the Alaska's defined-contribution retirement system.

As applicants evaluate departments across the country, Alaska cannot compete with agencies offering defined-benefit plans. This has left all of us with vacancies when applicants decide to pursue their careers elsewhere. For example, the North Pole Police Department has struggled for over eight months to find one qualified applicant. Other agencies, like APD are struggling to fill their police academies. In the most recent academy, APD recruitment fell 35% below their target, leaving 10 unfilled slots. The Fairbanks Police Department is losing officers as fast as they can hire them. These are just a few stories of the difficulties every agency in the state is facing.

Aside from difficulties in recruiting new applicants, we are all seeing our highly-trained, qualified, and experienced officers leave agencies to work out-of-state for other law enforcement agencies offering competitive defined-benefit retirement systems. We are all paying the high cost of training these Officers/Troopers just to see them leave after a few years of gaining valuable experience.

The combination of recruiting shortfalls and inability to retain incumbent officers is a potential crisis for ALL of Alaska's public safety organizations. Making this change is a step in the right direction to help recruit and retain law enforcement officers across the state. The Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police strongly supports HB79 so we can return ALL Police Officers and Troopers to a defined-benefit retirement system.

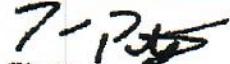
We thank you for your support of law enforcement and public safety officials across the State of Alaska, and I urge you to present this legislation.

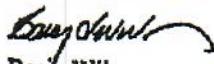
If you should have questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at [EJewkes@fairbanks.us](mailto:EJewkes@fairbanks.us) or at (907)450-6500.

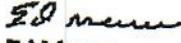
We appreciate your service to the State of Alaska and concern for our citizens.

With Sincere Regards,

  
Eric Jewkes  
Chief of Police, Fairbanks Police Department  
President  
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police

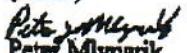
  
Tim Putney  
Chief of Police, Kodiak Police Department  
Treasurer  
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police

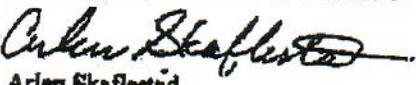
  
Barry Wilson  
Colonel, Alaska State Troopers  
Board Member  
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police

  
Ed Mercer  
Chief of Police, Juneau Police Department  
Board Member  
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police

  
Steve Dutra  
Chief of Police, North Pole Police Department  
Secretary  
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police

  
Thomas Clemons  
Chief of Police, Seward Police Department  
General Chair  
International Association of Chiefs of Police  
(IACP)

  
Peter Mlynarik  
Chief of Police, Soldotna Police Department  
Board Member  
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police

  
Arlen Skafstad  
Lieutenant, Yakutat BPD  
Board Member  
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police

Cc: Senators Coghill, Bishop, Kopp