

Dear House Finance Committee,

My name is Brian Kneaper. I am a firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department and a lifelong citizen of Alaska. I am writing you in regards to the retirement our current Tier IV public safety employees are receiving. My dad did over 40 years with the Anchorage Fire Department and it was a dream for me to work for AFD and to follow in his footsteps. I love Alaska, it's my home, It's is where I was raised, started my family, and want to raise my family. With the current retirement system we have in place I have been actively seeking employment for another fire department outside the State of Alaska, one that offers a defined benefit plan specifically. Our current Tier IV system is going to force me sooner rather than later, to leave the state I grew up in and the department I truly want to work for. This decision is unfortunate but it is one I have to make to support myself and family after retirement.

Not only is the retirement system a concern to me but it's bad for our state as well. Soon, if not already, a majority of our public safety employees will be Tier IV members. I know a number of AFD and APD employees who are actively seeking employment outside of the state to get a better retirement. With the average cost to train a public safety worker being \$190,000, seeking a better retirement system to help with retention of our Tier IV employees is a must. We are spending Alaskan money to get our public safety employees trained and then watching them leave to another state that offers a defined benefit plan. We need to offer more to keep our employees in Alaska, to have them gain valuable experience so they can pass on what they have learn over their careers to the next generation of public safety employees coming behind them. This will not only help keep the public more safe but also our public safety employees more safe. Tier IV requires a solution and HB79 provides just that. I strongly encourage the House Finance Committee to support HB79 and get this bill passed.

Thank you for your time,  
Brian Kneaper