

**From:** [Benjamin Lewis](#)  
**To:** [Rep. Neal Foster](#); [Rep. Tammie Wilson](#); [Rep. Jennifer Johnston](#); [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Andy Josephson](#); [Rep. Gary Knopp](#); [Rep. Bart LeBon](#); [Rep. Cathy Tilton](#); [Rep. Kelly Merrick](#); [Rep. Colleen Sullivan-Leonard](#); [Rep. Ben Carpenter](#); [Rep. Chuck Kopp](#)  
**Subject:** Support for HB79  
**Date:** Monday, May 6, 2019 8:51:25 AM

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Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Ben Lewis. I am a Firefighter and Paramedic with the Anchorage Fire Department. I am writing you today in support of HB79 and asking for action to be taken on the bill as soon as possible. I was hired in 2007 as part of the first group in the Tier IV retirement system for the Anchorage Fire Department. Since that time, I have personally seen recruitment numbers substantially drop as word continues to spread that the current state retirement system will not be adequate to meet retirement goals. I am also living with the challenges of preparing for retirement myself.

The job of the public service employee is an important one and Alaska needs to continue to remain competitive to recruit and retain the right people for the job. The cost and time to train new people is substantial. When I was first hired it was rare to hear of anyone seeking another job or actively looking for another department in the states to test for or lateral to. This is now a common thing. Many of our newer, and younger, employees are actively searching for another department to test for that has a pension. The recruitment of paramedics has been especially notable. We have now been forced to send current employees to Paramedic school due to a lack of interest from graduated or working paramedics from other departments.

Planning for retirement without a defined benefit or social security contributions is challenging. Working as a firefighter is a physically demanding profession that comes with a higher risk of injury over most other careers. Having to continue to work this job later in life when we are all more susceptible to injury will come at a cost. I understand that a new retirement plan comes with an upfront cost to the state however it will provide a long term savings and sustainability in consistent recruitment and appropriate retirement.

I ask for your support in furthering this bill and seeing it come to fruition. HB79 is a good and sustainable plan that has been vetted and proven to be successful in other departments around the country. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Ben Lewis  
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