

To the Members of the House Finance Committee

I would like to thank you for your service to the State of Alaska and the people therein and taking time from your busy schedule to read my letter and listen to my concerns. My name is Skyler Gallien and I am writing this letter to you on the request of a friend of mine Paul Miranda who is traveling to Juneau on the behalf of all members of IAFF Local 1264 and in particular, all the members who are in the State Tier 4 retirement system. I would like to take a moment and tell you about my personal history in the State of Alaska. I will then explain why I and many others in my position find Tier 4 lacking and what that may shortly mean to myself, my family and local community in the very near future.

I was born and raised in Nikiski, Alaska and grew up doing all the classic Alaska outdoor activities. Fishing, hunting, hiking, and boating to name just a few, I also participated in sports and other community events and groups. I graduated from Nikiski High in 2004 in the top ten percent of my class qualifying me for the University of Alaska Scholars Program. This assistance with tuition helped me to make the choice to stay in Alaska and attend the University of Alaska Fairbanks. I pursued and completed an Associate's degree in Emergency Services majoring in Municipal Fire Control. I also began as a volunteer firefighter and completed both national and State of Alaska Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Certification, also National Accreditation as a IFSAC Firefighter 2. From this time on I worked as a paid Firefighter/EMT and lived in a fire station for several years, going on hundreds of calls building my experience and competence in my field. I worked for several departments in the Fairbanks area and then took a Contract Firefighting job in Antarctica where I became certified as an Aircraft Rescue Firefighter. After this I returned to Fairbanks working for local departments for a few years before I was fortunate enough to be hired at my dream job working for the Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) in 2011

I have worked at busy stations my nearly eight years with Anchorage and gone on thousands of calls. This is not to brag but to highlight that in this line of work you get better and better at your job the more calls you go on. It gives you a base of knowledge and experience that cannot be gained any other way. Since working for AFD I have completed probation, become a member of the Hazardous Materials Response Team, achieved my Journeyman Certification with AFD and finished a Bachelor's degree in Health Care Administration. I have in my thirteen years in the fire service accumulated thousands of hours of training and thousands of emergency responses.

Upon being hired by AFD I entered in to the Tier 4 system for the first time. Both of my parents are Tier 1 employees with the state so I thought that being hired by the state would mean I had a decent retirement. After doing research I found this was not the case, I would have no medical and no pension and had at best a 401 K with not even a full match from the employer. When I sit down and run out the numbers Tier 4 is completely inadequate. Part of the reason for this is that if a public safety employee has a 30-year career they are very much the exception. Many people struggle to complete a 20-year career since this is a very physically demanding job. Injuries stack up, it's not an IF you will be hurt doing this line of work but WHEN. As a firefighter the likelihood that I will have cancer is significantly higher than the normal public. Add to this all the things that we are learning about the prevalence of PTSD in emergency responders. I have known several people who have either walked away from the job or were lucky enough to retire early due to either seeing terrible things or having good friends and

coworkers killed or injured on the job. In my opinion Tier 4 falls short as a retirement system for those that serve in public safety positions.

At the anniversary of my five year mark with AFD I became vested in the Tier 4 system, meaning all the money in the account leaves with me if I leave. Since this time, I have been seriously researching other departments out of state that offer a defined benefit retirement and some form of medical coverage. I do not want to leave Alaska; I love it here. My wife grew up here just like me and we greatly enjoy all the things that are uniquely Alaskan. Our first son just recently turned two and I want him to grow up with all the same amazing adventures that I have. All our immediate family is in this state; my brother works at AFD as well. I have travelled to all the continents of the globe and visited numerous countries and peoples. I have found Alaska and its people to be my favorite above all others. However, having said all that, in good conscience I cannot ignore the cold hard facts that I will not be able to take care of myself and my wife when we are old. We will be a burden on my son, I am unfortunately in that position now with some of my family that cannot take care of themselves since they are too old to work and have no defined benefit retirement. This adds an immense amount of stress to my life, I will not do this to my son.

There have been numerous openings for departments in the Pacific Northwest that offer defined benefit retirements and medical coverage. Me and my wife have been researching them thoroughly and I have been preparing my resume. Some of these places even offer "lateral hires", this means that much of the probationary period is shortened and your pay is higher than other starting Firefighters. This is all to hire previously qualified personnel from so called "feeder departments". This is bad for the Municipality and the State of Alaska, there are thousands of man hours invested in training me and the financial investment in me is honestly staggering. They would have to start all over training a person from scratch dumping hours and money in to a person to get them minimally qualified to serve the public. There is a strong chance that me and my family will be leaving the State of Alaska in the next year and the only reason is the inadequacy of Tier 4. I know I am not the only Tier 4 employee that feels this way and I don't think this system is what is best for these employees and in the long term I really believe it will be detrimental to the State of Alaska. I hope that a way can be found to improve this system. I have read over the drafts for a system that we as union have put forward and a system like this would keep my family here and others as well. I would ask nothing more than that you examine our ideas and judge them for their merit.

I thank you again for taking the time to read this letter and apologize for making it so long winded but I believe this topic to be of extreme importance. If you have any questions concerning my thoughts here please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions of what changes my Union Brothers and Sisters and I are proposing to Tier 4 please direct them to Paul Miranda, he has all the hard numbers.

Respectfully,
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