

Representative Chris Tuck
Alaska Representative District 23
State Capital Room 24
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Representative Chris Tuck,

My name is Gavin Strahan, a voter in Anchorage District 23. I have taken the time to write this letter to petition for your support of HB79. I have lived in Alaska my entire life, and have served the state in a variety of ways. I have worked as an Infantryman in the Alaska Army National Guard, an EMT with the Girdwood Fire Department, and currently as an Airport Police and Fire Officer. I am currently working under the Tier IV retirement system which is a lacking retirement program to retain our emergency responders.

HB79 will provide greater level of retirement security for emergency responders like myself. I have experienced firsthand a staffing issue at my current department, which the Tier IV system has a direct correlation to. I've heard on multiple occasions about people expressing the dislike for the Tier IV system, and how they wish it would go back to a defined benefits retirement system like the Tier III last offered in 2006. The majority of the department currently is Tier IV and many have expressed interest in transferring to another state or municipal department. The usual reason these officers give for leaving the department for another is for a defined benefits retirement system.

These men and women are some of Alaska's finest, hardworking, caring, and community oriented people that the state has, and I know would stay with their current departments if we as a state offered HB79's retirement plan. People leaving for other benefit systems leave our department short staffed. Public safety professions do not handle being short staffed well. When we are short staffed officers are routinely called in on their days off to work mandatory overtime positions.

Unlike many professions that can hire and train someone to work a position in a short amount of time, ours takes at least a year for someone to become fully competent and trained to work on their own. I can't imagine how much it costs the state to train an APFO and I know it would be better to retain those trained and provide better retirement security than to continue with the retention problems we currently have. A success with HB79 would keep quality emergency responders in the state and help care for us and our families.

Representative Tuck, I respectfully ask you to support HB79.

Officer Gavin Strahan

Gavin.t.strahan@gmail.com

907-947-0199