

**From:** [Terri](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** CES pay/benefit package  
**Date:** Monday, March 2, 2020 1:02:11 PM

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There are few jobs that are more critical in our community than first responders. We need seasoned employees who are well trained and familiar with the dangers that come with living in Alaska. This is not a career field that we want high turn around due to poor pay, training, or retirement plans.

I am writing to support HB79 as a constituent to Rep. Knopp. Alaska is losing a lot of local Firefighter paramedics to other states because of better retirement plans. With the current system once guys and gals are vested they are leaving for greener pastures in the lower 48 states. With that being said Alaska departments are using up money and time to train these Firefighter/ paramedics just to see them leave. Departments state wide are having trouble finding and hiring qualified paramedics due to the lack of a decent retirement plan. There is nothing keeping people here because after five years they can leave and work elsewhere without losing anything.

Brian & Terri Springer  
Soldotna, AK  
99669

**From:** [Chelsea Springer](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** CES retirement  
**Date:** Monday, March 2, 2020 12:02:53 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to support HB79 as a constituent to Rep. Knopp. Alaska is losing a lot of local Firefighter paramedics to other states because of better retirement plans. With the current system once guys and gals are vested they are leaving for greener pastures in the lower 48 states. With that being said Alaska departments are using up money and time to train these Firefighter/ paramedics just to see them leave. Departments state wide are having trouble finding and hiring qualified paramedics due to the lack of a decent retirement plan. There is nothing keeping people here because after five years they can leave and work elsewhere without losing anything.

This has been an ongoing problem with Alaska's emergency services. There are few jobs that are more critical in our community than first responders. We need seasoned employees who are well trained and familiar with the dangers that come with living in Alaska. This is not a career field that we want high turn around due to poor pay, training, or retirement plans.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ms. Springer

**From:** [Chelsea Springer](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** CES retirement  
**Date:** Monday, March 2, 2020 12:01:40 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to support HB79 as a constituent to Rep. Knopp. Alaska is losing a lot of local Firefighter paramedics to other states because of better retirement plans. With the current system once guys and gals are vested they are leaving for greener pastures in the lower 48 states. With that being said Alaska departments are using up money and time to train these Firefighter/ paramedics just to see them leave. Departments state wide are having trouble finding and hiring qualified paramedics due to the lack of a decent retirement plan. There is nothing keeping people here because after five years they can leave and work elsewhere without losing anything.

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Thank you for your time and consideration.

Chelsea

**From:** [Chelsea Springer](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** CES retirement  
**Date:** Monday, March 2, 2020 11:58:57 AM

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to support HB79 as a constituent to Rep. Knopp. Alaska is losing a lot of local Firefighter paramedics to other states because of better retirement plans. With the current system once guys and gals are vested they are leaving for greener pastures in the lower 48 states. With that being said Alaska departments are using up money and time to train these Firefighter/ paramedics just to see them leave. Departments state wide are having trouble finding and hiring qualified paramedics due to the lack of a decent retirement plan. There is nothing keeping people here because after five years they can leave and work elsewhere without losing anything.

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Thank you for your time and consideration.

Chelsea Springer

**From:** [Chelsea Springer](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** CES retirement  
**Date:** Monday, March 2, 2020 12:12:02 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to support HB79 as a constituent to Rep. Knopp. Alaska is losing a lot of local Firefighter paramedics to other states because of better retirement plans. With the current system once guys and gals are vested they are leaving for greener pastures in the lower 48 states. With that being said Alaska departments are using up money and time to train these Firefighter/ paramedics just to see them leave. Departments state wide are having trouble finding and hiring qualified paramedics due to the lack of a decent retirement plan. There is nothing keeping people here because after five years they can leave and work elsewhere without losing anything.

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Thank you for your time and consideration.

Bewellcreations

**From:** [Richard t ralls](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: Support of House Bill 79.  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 10:40:55 AM

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**From:** Richard t ralls [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 24, 2020 2:25 PM  
**To:** [www.Housefinance@akleg.gov](mailto:www.Housefinance@akleg.gov) <[www.Housefinance@akleg.gov](mailto:www.Housefinance@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** Support of House Bill 79.

Dear Representatives,

Thank you all for helping get house bill 79 this far.

My name is Richard Ralls and I am currently a firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department. I live in Anchorage with my wife and four kids. I am a second generation firefighter and my father retired here with 27 yrs. on. I currently have 19 yrs. with AFD.

I am writing you today to express my concerns about the current Tier IV retirement program. This has been the system since 2007 that all are employees are in. This retirement system is flawed and does not attract people to our fire department. We had a 2019 testing process of three hundred people or less and when I tested with the department there where 2000 testing and you had to be in the top 90% to even make the list of employees. I think House bill 79 would go along ways to fixing this problem.

I think that we should support the new firefighters with a retirement that helps them financially and House Bill 79 will help this. We should give back to the firefighters that have helped the citizens of Alaska thru their career. Please don't make this a training department and let employees go to other states that have defined benefit retirement plans. This does not help Alaskans and only benefits other states that get a well trained employee.

Please support House Bill 79. Thank you for your time.

Richard Ralls

**From:** [josh foster](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79 support letter  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 7:13:48 PM

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House Finance committee.

I am writing in support of HB79. I am a third generation Alaskan and I wish to continue to live and work in the State that I grew up in. HB 79 is important to secure financial stability to my family as well as being fiscally responsible to the State of Alaska. I am urging you to please take action on this now The time to act is now.

Josh Foster

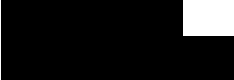
**From:** [Sean McMillan](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79 support  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 8:22:48 PM

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My name is Sean McMillan and I am a Firefighter/Paramedic and a 15 year veteran with the Anchorage Fire Department. I am sending this email in support of House Bill 79 and asking that the members of the Finance committee move HB79 forward now. I also wanted to convey my thanks and appreciation to everyone who's taken the time to consider this issue. When we ask someone to serve and sacrifice, it's vitally important that they know that they will be taken care of once the job is over. I am lucky. I was fortunate enough to be hired before our retirement system went to defined contribution. I can rest easy knowing that this state will take care of me even after I've chosen to retire from this profession. This is all that is being asked with HB79. We ask that our representatives show a commitment to our public safety employees and try and honor their service, even after they've hung up their spurs, so to speak. I truly believe HB79 works. We do not want another unsustainable defined benefit plan like we've had in the past. I believe that HB79 will not only take care of our public employees, but it also honors the legislators who choose to carry it through by giving them a truly responsible plan that both sides can stand behind, without having to justify need or argue against excess. Please move HB79 forward and help fight for public safety longevity in Alaska.

Please feel free to contact me with whatever questions or comments you might have. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Sean McMillan  
17724 Chilkat Ct  
Eagle River, AK 99577





**From:** [Jesse Tauriainen](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Sunday, March 1, 2020 2:58:10 PM

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Representative Knopp,

My name is Jesse Tauriainen. I work as a firefighter and EMT in District 30. My voice is only one among a chorus of Alaskan first responders who see the passing of HB 79 as a last hope of remaining in the state we love while working in this field.

Within the past two years I've celebrated with four fellow firefighters as they retired after serving the community for 20+ years. It is sobering in those moments to look around the room and see many younger, newer firefighters, who work as PERS tier IV employees. I fall into this group. We currently cannot expect to enjoy retirement after 20-25 years.

It is not merely the luxury of working fewer years that we hope to address; it is the reason behind the numbers. This career is physically demanding. It is stressful. These are not opinions. The studies are clear. Many Alaskans working in public safety have left the state because of this, and many more plan to if not addressed.

Thank you for your time. I hope you will consider advocating for HB 79, for the good of Alaskans.

Sincerely,  
Jesse Tauriainen



**From:** [Jensen, Daniel](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Saturday, February 29, 2020 10:57:56 AM

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I am writing to support HB79 as a constituent to Reb. Knopp. Alaska is losing a lot of local FF paramedics to other states because of better retirement plans. With the current system once guys and gals are vested they are leaving for greener pastures in the lower 48 states. With that being said Alaska departments are using up money and time to train these FF/ paramedics just to see them leave. Departments state wide are having trouble finding and hiring qualified paramedics due to lack of interest with the current retirement. There is nothing keeping people here because after five years they can leave and work elsewhere without losing anything.

Thanks for your time,

Dan Jensen

FF paramedic

CES

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Jon](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 10:32:22 PM

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Members of the House Finance Committee,

Im writing today to express my concern regarding HB 79 for your Public Safety servants, more specifically those who hired into the Tier 4 system.

My name is Jonathan Davis, a Firefighter Paramedic with the Anchorage Fire Department. I have been an employee here for six years.

As I'm sure you have heard and understand, our state is loosing our safety servants to other municipalities around the country who offer a defined retirement benefit. The negative impact this has on our state is multifaceted. Firstly, from the safety standpoint, when you can't keep the police cars or fire apparatus staffed, the people in distress are who suffers or possibly loses their or a loved ones life. Secondly, and also looking from the safety aspect, if we continue to loose new officers, we will then loose the experience and growth that will make a whole and healthy organization. We know you wouldn't put a new police officer or firefighter into a stressful high danger environment right out of school. An organization without experience is hollow. Thirdly, when one of these servants leaves their job in Alaska, the state loses the money used to get this person in the "seat" in an operational capacity. Not to mention the cost training another candidate, which is where the major cost savings to the state would be realized if HB 79 is passed.

Approving this bill would not only address the above concerns, but most importantly it would give the public a strong reliable safety service. This is realized when our newly trained employees don't leave for another public safety job in another state because the benefits are better there. It will also be evident when 1000 people submit applications and show up for the testing process instead of 300, garnering a higher density of high performing candidates to choose from.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal. It will have such a positive impact on our state from the Public safety aspect.

V/R  
Jonathan Davis

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Molly Etters](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 10:30:34 PM

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Dear House Finance Committee,

My name is Molly Etters and I am a Firefighter at the Anchorage Fire Department. I am writing to urge you to support House Bill 79.

The Tier IV retirement system is proving to be a failure. Various studies have illustrated that after about ten years of retirement, the average Public Safety employee will have run out of money. HB 79 proposes a solution to the retirement problem we are facing by both saving the State money in the long run, and providing more security for the Public Safety employees that serve the citizens of Alaska.

Valuable employees and residents of Alaska have been leaving for lateral positions in other states that offer a defined benefit retirement system. These are good workers, and in my experience folks that would like to stay in their hometowns and in the state they love. Personally, I moved up here from Colorado and fell in love with the state. I sought out the Anchorage Fire Department to establish a career that would give me security so that I could stay in Alaska. I am quickly learning that my future is not secure with Tier IV. Public Safety employees have demanding jobs on both their bodies and minds, forcing them to retire at an earlier age. This earlier retirement age also benefits the departments that employ them as it has been proven that older employees both get hurt more often, and have longer recovery times. This means that we will retire earlier, without SBS or medical benefits, and run out of our retirement around the age of 65 (likely with a chronic back or shoulder injury, or worse, a serious medical condition).

With a high turnover rate, eventually the standards of Public Safety in Alaska will go down. In the fire service, learning from those with years of experience is integral in a job where we have high-risk low-frequency calls. With the population of departments continually getting younger and having employees leave after a few short years on, these departments will lack experience, directly influencing emergency outcomes.

I have looked into lateral positions offered in various Washington departments. I do not want to leave my home in Alaska, and I know that there are others who are looking at job opportunities outside. But, with nothing being done to fix Tier IV, it seems inevitable that we will continue to lose valuable employees and continue to cost the State money. I urge you to support HB 79, and help fix this retirement problem by using a system modeled off some of the most successful programs in the U.S.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Molly Etters

**From:** [Adam Hoke](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 9:55:22 PM

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To Whom it May Concern;

I am writing in support of HB 79.

Although Alaska is very rich in natural resources, Alaskans are the most valuable asset.

If the current structure continues, Alaska will finance the expensive training required to prepare safety workers without long term results. Many of these individuals will end up leaving the state in search of defined benefits and meaningful retirement. In this cycle, Alaska sucks up the huge initial costs while other states reap the long term benefit of a trained, ready and able employee. Alaska again recruits, hires and trains new people, in a never ending cycle where we will end up exporting our best talent.

I encourage you to take care of the people who take care of others. Keep our people in our state.

Thank you,  
Adam Hoke

**From:** [LARRY FARRELL](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 6:51:31 PM

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Dear Representatives,

I am a constituent of Sullivan-Leonard in the Mat-Su area. I am writing in support of HB 79 and urge all of you to move it thru the legislative process.

My name is Pamela Farrell who resides in Wasilla. I was born and raised in Alaska and have lived here since. My husband has been a member of the Carpenters Union 1281 since 1974 and we enjoy the benefit of a retirement check each month. Our son Adam Farrell works for the Anchorage Fire Department and I believe he should enjoy the same benefit. We should do all we can to retain our Public Safety employee's after we have spend the time and money for training.

Thank you for your time.

Pamela Farrell  
921 N. Northshore Dr.  
Wasilla, AK [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 6:39:01 PM

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Dear Representatives,

I am a constituent of Sullivan-Leonard in the Mat-Su area. I am writing in support of HB 79 and urge all of you to move it thru the legislative process.

My name is Larry Farrell who resides in Wasilla. I was born in Alaska before it became a state and have lived here since. Directly out of High School I joined the Carpenters Local 1281 in Anchorage and worked as a carpenter my whole life. Now that I'm retired I have the benefit of enjoying a retirement check from the Carpenter's. My son Adam Farrell works for the Anchorage Fire Department and I believe he should enjoy the same benefit. With the expense and time it takes to train Public Safety employee's we should do all that is possible to retain them.

Thank you for your time.

Larry Farrell  
921 N. Northshore Dr.  
Wasilla, AK 99654  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [Evan Olson](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 4:45:24 PM

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you in support of HB79. The current retirement plan for firefighters in our state is woefully inadequate. I am hopeful that HB79 will help fix the many problems with Tier 4 retirement. I would like to see the House Finance Committee take action on this bill as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,  
Evan Olson



**From:** [Jayson Russell](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 3:41:23 PM

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To the House Finance Committee Members,

Thank you for taking the time to look at my email; it regards a topic that - as an Alaskan - is very important to me and my family.

I grew up in Anchorage, and as a young boy I knew that I wanted to be a firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department. I have very real memories that "planted the seed," if you will, and I used those memories to point me in the direction that eventually led me to land my dream. It took me longer than most of my friends, but I finally got on with the Anchorage Fire Department at the age of 29. And let me say that I love being an Anchorage Firefighter. It's been amazing to finally have your dream become a reality, and then it turns out the reality is actually better than the dream.

So imagine that you're me and you've finally made it to your dream job. Now imagine that a bunch of people that you grew up with, and worked alongside to get to your dream job together, have now told you their looking for other firefighter jobs outside of Alaska because, "there's not a retirement here anymore." And, I'm not kidding or trying to be dramatic. People are looking hard at other fire departments (especially in Washington) - because the retirement there is objectively better. I have at least four friends who I am in constant communication with that NOW (didn't always) work outside the State of Alaska, because of the Tier IV retirement package. And I'm constantly hearing from others "did you hear this/that Fire Department just opened up? Are you going to put in for it?".... As a little boy that always loved looking up at the big Anchorage Fire Engines, I never thought that once I was riding around in them that "working somewhere else" would be a constant topic.

And I'd be lying if I said that my wife and I haven't had the same conversations. Which is sad; our siblings are here, our parents our here, our lives are here in Alaska! We were high school sweethearts that met at Service High, and someday we were hoping to put our kids at Service too. And it doesn't stop there, we have lots of adventures that we want to have throughout our Alaskan life/journey. But at some point in time, we have to look at the long term. We have to make a decision that will be good for us when we're 60, and not just good when we're 31.

I ask that you please TAKE ACTION NOW. Stop putting fire and police on the back burner of the State priority. Please show us that you care. Thank you for your time.

-Jayson

**From:** [Tab Key II](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 1:58:44 PM

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Dear House Finance Committee Members,

I writing in support of HB 79 and ask that you to as well.

I am a 1264 Union Firefighter with the Municipality of Anchorage for 2 years now. I honestly had no idea that AFD didn't offer a pension anymore. That was absolutely my poor judgement of not knowing, before I had applied for position. The interesting part is that all of my wife's clients she speaks with are also unaware. I believe most of the public, that we serve, have the same misunderstanding.

I love my job. I love serving the community that I adore. It's no secret that agencies in other states offer 10x the benefits to their firefighters in other communities. Again, I love where I am at and what I'm doing here, but I'd be lying if I said I hadn't considered testing for other Fire Depts in other locations. I know many AFD guys that have tested and are in the process of testing for positions out of state. My best friend in Tacoma was recently offered a job with AFD and the same week he got an offer for the City of Tacoma for a Water Treatment job. Take a guess as to which job he took- it's the one with the benefits that takes care of his health & family more. And, I cannot even blame the guy. Another buddy that is a paramedic with us has a lateral offer on the table as we speak. Sadly, he'll be gone in the next few months. Then, we'll have to hire and train up another guy to take his spot.

It's often talked about around the station that we really have to take care of our finances and our bodies because when we're done, we'll have no more pay checks, and even more crazy, no medical insurance! My biggest fear is being 55 years old with a banged up body, working just to have medical insurance to take care of myself after giving everything I had for 25 years serving my community.

In conclusion, I love everything about this job. I worked my tail off to get it. But, in terms of doing what is best for myself and my family, if something like HB 79 isn't passed, I've got to really consider some life decisions and plan for the future.

Thank you all for reading my story. I admire your heart for also serving the people.

Be safe out there,

Tab Key II

Anchorage Firefighter

**From:** [Marvin Kneaper](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 12:14:52 PM

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I whole heartedly support bill HB 79. These men and women deserve decent retirement after there many years of service.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Clayton Wade](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 10:01:26 PM

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Dear House Finance Committee,

I am writing in support of House Bill 79. I am writing to urge you, the House Finance Committee, to take action on House Bill 79 immediately.

This bill is extremely important for our first responders, and will make Alaska a competitive place for first responder careers, rather than losing great people to the lower 48.

Thank you,

Clayton Wade

**From:** [Trever Ferrin](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 8:32:00 PM

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Dear House Finance Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 79 because I feel that this is a great alternative to our current retirement plan. I strongly feel that this house bill will help with retention of public service employees. I am asking that the House Finance Committee take action on this bill as this is the best shot this bill has to pass. Thank you for your time

Sincerely,  
Trever Ferrin

**From:** [kyle fox](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 5:05:54 PM

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February 27, 2020

To whom this may concern,

I am a Firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department and I am writing you to show my support for the upcoming HB79 bill. It is vital for me to have a prosperous and fair retirement. Currently, we have no defined retirement which is concerning and quite frankly, unfair to myself and my fellow first responders. As first responders, we constantly put ourselves in harms way to help others; we risk our lives in an effort to keep Anchorage a safe place. I hope that we can receive a defined retirement plan for our efforts.

Some highlights of HB79

### **Good for Alaska**

#### Safeguard Mechanisms to Adjust Contributions and PRPA

- o Employee contributions set by ARM Board with a range of 8%-10%
- o Post Pension Retirement Adjustments (PRPA aka Inflation Protection) may be withheld if plan funding is less than 90%

#### Minimum Retirement Age

- o Retirement Age of 55 years old with 20 years of service is established, or age 60 years old if vested with less than 20 years of service
- o Final average salary calculation increased to 5 years vs. 3 years

#### HRA Tier IV Medical

- o Retirement medical coverage remains the same as Tier IV -3% of average PERS salary contributed to Health Retirement Account (HRA)

### **Makes Alaska Competitive**

#### Recruitment and Retention

- o Alaska's peace officers and firefighters are leaving our state in alarming numbers for other states offering defined benefit retirements after having received costly training and experience in Alaska. This is evident in the recent Alaska Department of Public Safety Recruitment and Retention Plan Overview 2018-2023 and the experience of police and fire departments across the state.

#### Offers Stability in Retirement

o Several states, such as Washington and Wisconsin, offer DB retirement plans for public safety that are fully funded and stable. Conservative and hybrid DB plans offer financial stability for the State and a secure retirement benefit to current and prospective Public Safety Officers and Firefighters.

#### Ability to Attract Public Safety from Across the Country

o Based on the DPS Plan Overview referenced above, “prospective candidates report they find agencies outside of Alaska more appealing due to the defined benefit retirement package offered by some other states”.

### **Good for Public Safety Employees**

#### Hybrid Plan with DB Benefits and DC Medical

o Employees receive the benefits of a DB plan such as professional money management, lower plan fees, pooled risk, and long term investment horizon.

#### Ability to Budget in Retirement and Supplement During Career

o By factoring years of service and HRA medical, public safety employees can project and budget for retirement needs.

#### Minimum 20-year Career and Retirement Age of 55

o Public safety employees experience shorter careers due to the significant physical and mental demands inherent in public safety work. Risk of injury and costly worker’s compensation claims are reduced when employees do not feel compelled to work beyond a full career in public safety.

Sincerely,  
Kyle Fox

**From:** [Gary Saville](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 1:58:51 PM

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To House Finance Committee,

I am writing this correspondence to express my support for the pending HB 79 legislation that address defined benefits retirement for public safety employees. I am a Lieutenant at the Fairbanks Airport Police & Fire Department and have worked there for the last 5 years. Our department has a total of 26 sworn officers. In the five years I have worked here we have hired 18 officers in an effort to fully staff our department. Of those 18, less than half are still with the department. A number of those left specifically because they could go to a department in a state that offered a defined benefits retirement. It is imperative that this exodus of highly qualified individuals be stopped as soon as possible. An immediate resolution to pass this bill would go a long way in keeping highly qualified officers here in the state. It would also greatly improve our ability to bring officers from out of the state up here to work. Thank you for your time and for all that you do.

Respectfully,

LT Gary Olsen-Saville  
Fairbanks Airport Police & Fire Department



**From:** [Jesse Kinsland](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 1:56:00 PM

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I am writing today to ask you to support HB79. I have seen how our current retirement plan hurts police departments ability to retain quality officers. They come to Alaska, receive excipients training , and leave to another state that offers a more competitive retirement plan.

Also, as an officer that has received multiple injuries in the line of duty, I am having to consider how I am going to medically care for myself in the long run. As I write to you today, am am currently recovering from a brain injury I received a couple of weeks ago when a suspect in a stolen truck rammed my police vehicle. Eventually I will have to retire, and at my current pace I don't see my body holding out till I'm in my 60's and I'm only 33 now.

Please, create a better retirement plan than our current one. I love being a police officer. Being able to help protect my community from criminals is a truly rewarding career, but it is hard on the body.

A better plan would also help with departments throughout the state with their recruiting efforts. It would make our state more competitive and let us gather a better pool of applicants.

Thank you for your time.

Jesse Kinsland

**From:** [Bryant Molle](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 10:15:16 AM

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I am currently a proud member of the Anchorage Fire Department and a third generation public safety worker. Unlike my father and grandfather, I will not enjoy a defined benefit under the current system. I was born and raised here in Alaska and have always wanted to raise my children in this great state. In the interest of my growing family, I am currently considering other employment out of state in pursuit of a stable future for myself and my growing family. Please support HB 79 so I can keep my family home in Alaska. Thank you for your time.

**From:** [Dustin Molle](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 10:01:51 AM

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House Finance Committee,

I am writing this email in support of House Bill 79. I am proud to say that I am a second generation firefighter at the Anchorage Fire Department and very happy to be a part of the organization. Unfortunately I have recently seen many of my fellow Tier IV members leave the Anchorage Fire Department in pursuit of better retirement plans out of state. HB 79 would keep Anchorage from losing great employees. Please vote in favor of HB 79. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Dustin Molle

**From:** [William Gehler](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 9:39:17 AM

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I strongly request you support HB 79. Our First Responders deserve this amendment t to their benefits. They deserve our support as they so skillfully care for us.

Bill Gehler

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [William Gehler](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 9:11:58 AM

---

We urge the committee, and the full legislature to support HB79. Out First responders need and deserve this adjustment to their benefits. It's the least we can do for those who selflessly care for us.

Respectfully,

Jan and Bill Gehler

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Upchurch, Thomas H.](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 7:32:35 AM

---

Hello,

My name is Tom Upchurch and I'm writing in support of HB 79 to be acted on. This defined benefit will help our public safety officers and firefighters stay in the state rather than leave the state for a defined retirement plan.

I'm a firefighter and have been for 19 years. I have a defined retirement plan and I'm so appreciative of that and I want to thank you for that support. When I competed for this job I went against over 1400 people for 30 some positions. My number was 1439. Now we have 240 people show up to test. What has changed? We still have amazing support from the city, state and public. We have good protective clothing, advanced 911 system, a supportive echelon and newer apparatus. What are we missing... a defined benefit! The numbers show we are losing people, I'm afraid for our future public safety officers and firefighters! Please support this bill and act on it.

Sincerely

Tom Upchurch

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

**From:** [Adam Farrell](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 9:21:40 PM

---

Dear Finance Committee,

I am writing you today to ask you to please take action on house bill 79 now. I have been with the Anchorage Fire Department going on 13 years and have seen the affect that tier IV has had on our department. Let's do what's right for the people that serve the community. We have to do everything we can to stay competitive with employment in these economic times.

Sincerely,  
Adam Farrell

**From:** [Maggie Holeman](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 9:16:46 PM

---

I am writing to encourage you to support HB 79. My son is an Anchorage firefighter, tier 4, and third generation Alaskan. It's imperative to have a sustainable retirement system to keep the valued and talented employees in Alaska.

Please support HB 79.

Thank you.

Maggie Holeman

Former state firefighter Tier 1

Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [Beau Gehler](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 9:11:04 PM

---

To: Rep. Chuck Kopp <Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov> Subject: Support of House Bill 79

Dear Representative Kopp,

First and foremost, thank you for all your hard work and support in getting House Bill 79 this far!!!

My name is Beau Gehler and I live in Anchorage. I've been a firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department for 4 years.

I'm writing to you today to express my grave concern about the inadequacies of the current Tier IV retirement system that all Public Safety employees, hired since 2007, are members of. The Tier IV plan is incredibly flawed. As a result, recruitment and retainment of Public Safety Employees is down. House Bill 79 goes a long way towards fixing that.

There are many fire departments in the Northwest that regularly offer "laterals" from one department to another. And many of them are still offering a defined benefit retirement plan. Since 2007 we have started losing people to these lateral transfers at an alarming rate and it will only increase unless Tier IV is replaced with something that can offer some financial security. HB 79 is a good start towards correcting that in a practical way which is good for both the State of Alaska as well as the hard working people who serve it.

The bottom line is this. When I first tested with AFD it was not uncommon to be testing against 1000 people. These days we are lucky if we receive 500 applications and the common thing that you will hear from people is that the Tier IV retirement system is to blame.

Please continue to support House Bill 79 and encourage your colleagues on the House Finance Committee to do the same. The cost to the State of Alaska in supporting this bill will be far less than if we do nothing at all.

Sincerely,

Beau Gehler

bgehler@gmail.com

206-981-7978

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Dustin Huf](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 8:53:07 PM

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February 26, 2020

House Finance Committee

I am writing in support of HB 79. As a Tier IV employee for the last 14 years, I am growing increasingly concerned about my family's financial future. Action on this bill is paramount to provide us any monetary certainty. Because Tier IV members don't receive Social Security benefits, there's really no way for us to secure a livelihood to conclusion.

Sincerely,

Dustin Huf

**From:** [Hanson, Brian J](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 8:16:30 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to urge you to support House Bill 79 and to swiftly take action to pass this Bill on to the Senate. I am a Firefighter/Paramedic for the Anchorage Fire Department for over 5 years now. I feel strongly that the length of my career will be gauged solely on this Bill and the potential of a pension system. The current retirement system set in place is not adequate enough for a civil servant who is expected to abuse and sacrifice their body for the betterment of the public we serve. Please take the initiative NOW to fix this issue that previous politicians before you have created. If it is not resolved soon the state will continue to lose well trained first responders to the states that do offer a pension with a medical benefit.

Thank you for your time,  
Brian Hanson

**From:** [Brian Pavadore](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 8:12:40 PM

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House Finance Committee:

I am an employee for the Anchorage Police Department, specifically a Police Dispatcher and 911 Call Taker. I have been employed for 6 years and unfortunately got stuck into the PERS Tier 4, Defined Contribution, retirement plan. I write for you to consider passing this bill as it would be a step in the right direction for public safety employees in the state. Below I have listed a few reasons:

- As a public safety employee, my body undergoes stress that other people don't endure in their careers.
- As a 911 Call Taker, I am a part of a very special team that IS the very first response anyone gets before getting a Police Officer or Firefighter
- These jobs (Dispatcher, Police, and Fire) with poor retirements unfortunately have high attrition and there is a constant recruiting battle.
- Departments strive to higher quality employees that make decisions to put their lives on the line, their mental health and sanity on the line do deserve better retirements; one that matches other departments many other states and the federal government; however with poor retirement, quality employees are harder to find. When quality employees are found, many will obtain training and then move to a jurisdiction with a better retirement.
- I work night shift from 7 pm until 7 am. My wife and child have dayshift scheduled. I sacrifice my time and life with family to work in public safety because it is what I want to do. I can say I am constantly looking out of state for new jobs, specifically for a better retirement.
- I am missing my child's life and many family events because I want to be a public safety dispatcher.
- All these, amongst many more reasons.

As a Dispatcher, I am responsible for the lives of those in their patrol cars responding to these accidents. Their emergencies are my emergencies. I have seen many people force to retire due to medical reasons (pain related from stress, mental health deterioration, etc); that's in part because we are the first line of communications and there is a understanding that we can't be emotional because that would/could make situations worse. Instead, we hold on to stress from the job, and it slowly breaks us down.

I know there is help out there for us. Most people in a normal career wait until last minute before getting help - this applies the same for dispatchers. The problem is dispatchers and 911 call takers have different amounts of stress.

I am not sure if you all heard - recently we had an officer involved shooting during a traffic stop. We had 2 officers on scene at the time - 1 of the officers was shot. Luckily the suspect shot his badge and vest so the officer didn't get injured or killed. The dispatcher on radio during this, isn't the only one that carries on this stress. The dispatcher on radio is in training so a 2nd dispatcher on radio also has the emotional stress from a critical incident. We treat our officers like they are our children - we want them to get home safe and we do everything we can to make that happen (emphasis added). The stress doesn't just stop with the officer and dispatcher. Since we all work closely together, it affects every one of us. A coworker of mine

couldn't even talk about the incident because her friend was involved and he couldn't talk to her about the incident because it was too new. This caused additional emotional stress.

You see, all of us want to do this job. We love that we get the opportunity to help the community in a way not many people really get to. I could go on with many examples of why we deserve better retirements, and I hope you receive them from many police and fire employees.

I ask that you consider this bill and really push to get it passed. I can see there is a lot of legal language in the bill and I can't tell if the language is also for dispatchers. If it is just for police and firefighters, I urge that you still pass the bill because it is a step in the right direction. Then we can work on expanding it to include all public safety dispatchers and 911 call takers, and all public safety administrative personnel. Anyone working in public safety - to include all administrative personnel - deserve a defined benefit (pension) retirement.

If you have any questions and want to follow up, I welcome it. Please reply to the email.

Very Respectfully

//SIGNED//

Brian Pavadore

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

**From:** [Matt Fellman](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 11:39:31 AM

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I'm writing to you today in regards to HB79 and the importance of it passing in the near future. As someone who has worked as an Alaskan firefighter over the last several years, I have become very familiar and therefore concerned regarding my future. Alaska is where I was born, raised, and a place that I love to call home. However, even though Alaska is dear to my heart I would be lying if I said that I haven't actively been searching and putting applications into departments within the lower 48 to work for the extended future. The fact is that Alaska's public safety retirement in comparison to much of America's Northwest is essentially non-existent. Although I hate thinking about it, there will come a day that my body, mind, and ability to perform as a firefighter/paramedic will come to an end sooner than my ability to retire will. The statistics speak for themselves as public safety employees are abandoning Alaska's retirement to greener pastures and I have seen this firsthand during my career in Alaska. Unless something is changed in the near future, my family and I will be forced to look out for my best interest and hop on that same wagon out of town. I hope that you will consider placing your support into the passing of HB79 and make an enormous step in giving back to the public safety employees of Alaska.

Thank you,

Matt Fellman- Anchorage Resident



**From:** [Brett Sarber](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 10:17:05 AM

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Dear Committee Members,

I'm writing to support HB 79 and I hope you'll take a minute to read my email.

I started my law enforcement career in 1994 with the Washington State Patrol. After three years with WSP, I left there and came north to Anchorage because of the defined retirement benefit for police officers that was set at 20 years through PERS Tier III. I've been a police officer at the Anchorage Police Department for over 22 years. I've worked patrol, and have been a detective for almost 15 years in the Crimes Against Children Unit and Special Victim Unit.. I wish it was possible to succinctly sum up the violence of this career on a officer's life through trauma and vicarious trauma. I wish it were possible to use words, written on a page, to thoroughly convey everything that all police officers and detectives go through annually, but it is not possible. However I will try to impart the necessity of a defined retirement benefit to help compensate people who have dedicated their lives to a career of public service.

Since 2006, all officers hired in Alaska have not had a defined benefit, guaranteeing a retirement benefit for their years of service. This has caused APD to lose dozens of qualified people to other agencies outside the state. Also a lot of officers have left the department simply because it wasn't worth it. What wasn't worth it?

- Responding to and looking at the trauma of death, from opioid overdoses to baby deaths from a drunk person who laid on their baby and suffocated their child to the young person who used a shotgun to shoot themselves in the head, scattering bone and brain matter across entire room.
- Responding to and looking at fatal vehicle crashes and seeing someone crushed or burned to death in horrible accidents.
- Responding to and investigating serious rapes, gun shot wounds, knife wounds, industrial accidents and sexual abuse of minors.
- Responding to gun fights, fist fights, traffic stops and domestic violence where at every single call you may be fighting for your life or the life of someone else. Every day officers are killed across America in every way imaginable, and we get emails of every single officer killed in the line of duty. It is a dark edge of the job, maybe it keeps us safer, but it is a constant reminder of what can easily happen.
- The stress of not knowing what will happen next.
- The pay and benefits were not enough to compensate for any and all of the above.

Many of the officers who were in my academy stayed the entire 20 years or more. I graduated the police academy in 1997. 28 recruit officers started my academy. The training process revealed to some that it may not be the right career choice, so after all training was completed we were down to 23. We only lost one officer to another outside police agency, and we lost another in the first 4 years due to a career change. That left us at 21 officers. We all made it to 20 years, and some have left now that they reached normal retirement. Others have stayed trying to get to 25 year mark where PERS will cover medical costs for the retiree and their dependants.

Had there not been a defined retirement benefit at 20 years for police, I would have never left

the WSP and came north. Had there not been a defined retirement benefit that I've been aiming for, I probably would have left a long time ago for a dozen other jobs that would have paid as much, and some federal jobs offered defined retirement benefits. But I knew that I was earning a real retirement benefit here, so I stayed. I stayed and absorbed the trauma and vicarious trauma. I stayed and endured withering cross-examination by defense attorneys for hours and hours in major felony trials. I stayed and tolerated having my police car spit on while parked at local businesses. I stayed and grimly faced the constant danger posed to all officers. I stayed and anguished the wear and tear on my family while I was on call 24/7, 365 days a year for almost 15 years as a detective. I sadly missed school events, I missed holidays, I missed birthday parties, and I missed untold countless nights of no sleep because I was working all night while the city slept. I stayed and persevered through it all, in large part because I knew I was headed to a defined retirement benefit through PERS.

Providing a defined benefit for Police and Fire is something the State of Alaska should be doing in perpetuity. The jobs and dangers they face are not going to change in the foreseeable future. Providing a defined benefit is the best way that the State of Alaska, representing the People of Alaska, can say "Thank you" for your dedication and years of service for an extremely difficult job, done under the most difficult circumstances. "Thank you" for staying with it when it was the hardest. "Thank you" for staying in Alaska and doing your part to keep the citizens safe from harm.

Police officers want to know and feel that the citizens of Alaska value their dedication and work by offering a defined benefit retirement package. Please pass HB 79 for every single person who has chosen to go into public safety in police and fire.

Brett Sarber



**From:** [Samantha Wolters](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 9:47:20 AM

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I am writing to please ask for your support for house bill 79 and I ask you to please take action on this bill now.  
Thank you for your time and service.  
Respectfully,  
Samantha Wolters

**From:** [Michael Wolcott](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 7:58:58 AM

---

I am writing to please ask for your support for house bill 79 and I ask you to please take action on this bill now.  
Thank you for your time and service.

Respectfully,  
Michael Wolcott

**From:** [Ben Booher](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 5:23:14 PM

---

Dear Representatives,

I am writing in support of House Bill 79. I am a 19 year employee of the Anchorage Fire Department. I am fortunate enough to have a pension under a prior plan. To stay competitive with the Outside departments we need to offer a better retirement plan to both our recent and future hires. We are losing far too many hard working employees to states offering a better plan. We are investing large amounts of money to train our firefighters and emergency medical personnel. It is not money well invested if the employees take that investment elsewhere.

Thank you for your consideration HB 79



**From:** [Brett Phillips](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 2:57:40 PM  
**Attachments:** [Blank.docx](#)

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**From:** [Chris Kiewik](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 2:40:43 PM

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Dear Alaskan elected officials,

I am writing to state my support of House Bill 79. It is my request as a life-long Alaskan that you pass this bill to provide for the futures of the men and women that risk their lives every day to protect all Alaskans. As you know the current Tier 4 system is woefully void of real benefits for public employees many of whom sacrifice their own health in retirement in protection of others. What's more, we are losing quality employees at an alarming rate to other states that provide a dignified retirement to those who earn it. This is a trend that will only cause harm and strife for all Alaskans as more good people leave our great state in search of a place that is more conducive to raising and caring for their families. Please understand that I am not being hyperbolic and this is an absolute reality. I have worked in public safety in Anchorage for 20 years and can assure you that this attrition is a reality. I have personally seen many young firefighters leave the state because of the lack of a viable future in the current Tier 4 system. Please pass HB79 for the sake of all Alaskans.

Thank you for your time.

Chris Kiewik  
Firefighter/EMT Anchorage Fire Dept  


**From:** [carla hunley](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 79  
**Date:** Monday, March 2, 2020 6:01:06 PM

---

To All,

Please support HB 79. I would ask you to please take action on this bill now.

Thank you,

Don Hunley



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Cc:** [Amber & Landon Forth](#)  
**Subject:** HB79 letter of support  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 12:10:21 PM

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To my Honorable Representatives,

I am writing in support of House Bill 79.

My name is Landon Forth. I am a lifelong Alaskan, born and raised in Anchorage. I am 49 years old, a father of three children, and married to another true Alaskan.

Together, we have chosen to call this our home. Our hope is to raise our children to love Alaska as we do, and to consider raising a family here as we have.

I have served in the military, ran my own construction company, and currently work as a Captain with the Anchorage Fire Department. I am writing you in concern of our current Tier IV retirement system. Along with 31 others, I was in the first AFD hire group under the Tier IV system.

To be clear, I love my job and the citizens we serve. I have been fortunate to have worked with some of the finest human beings on earth, and the AFD has been no exception.

By now, over half of my colleagues are Tier IV employees. Over the past several years, many of my coworkers have discussed testing for other professional departments in the Lower 48. Departments that offer defined benefits (DB), a retirement system. Several of them have tested, several have already left, several more are testing currently. There are still professional fire departments offering great wages, benefits, work conditions AND retirement; this concept is NOT a magic unicorn.

Tier IV retirement is several things, what it is NOT is a long term solution to the future of our state. My city is spending millions on recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development. In many cases creating a "fish-in-a-barrel" environment, a professional training camp for the competitive departments mentioned above to snipe from. All at the expense of our citizens and their hard earned tax dollars. I am speaking of AFD, APD, and several other professional union work groups within our state.

Let's face the facts. Alaska is an expensive place to live, work and play. The Alaskan spirit is alive and well, but finances do matter. Of my hire group of 31, one left the job after just 5 years to become a school counselor (out of state with DB). Three others have left as well (DB) and several more are on the fence. And that's just my hire group. I believe as many as 20 employees tested for other fire departments (DB) just last year. That number will continue to increase. Add to the FACT that my department is already doing more with less, with no financial relief on the horizon, a significant number of our work group is already looking for greener pastures elsewhere (DB).

Please consider House Bill 79 as a step in the right direction.

I am urging the House Finance Committee to take action on this bill and continue to move it through the legislative process.

Please consider:

- Tier IV has been proven time and time again to be an inadequate retirement system for public safety employees.
- The state is wasting money by training public safety employees and then seeing them leave the state. These are hardworking, model citizens, often with families. A gift to the community that values their talents and spirit.
- We are no longer competitive in recruiting. It is proven that an employee hired from out of state is much more likely to leave Alaska within the first 5 years of employment. Taking their training and experience with them.
- We recognize there will be a cost to this bill, but the cost of doing nothing will be much greater.
- Tier IV requires a solution and HB79 is just that. Please let our leadership work with the State to help create a solution that is financially responsible and equitable to all. Please do this for the future of our State and our hard working citizens that live here.

As of this writing, I have no immediate plans to leave the job or community I love. I can tell you however that I have had this discussion with my wife several times already. Without a defined benefit, the retirement carrot dangling out in the distance (in terms of longevity), greener pastures are literally only a plane ride away. Add to the fact that quitting a Tier IV job is the only way to get the use of your financial nest egg for non-traditional investing, it becomes too simple to make the leap of faith.

Please consider the long term health of our city governments, our workers, and our State. Please help us lead from the front, for our future.

Please take action now.

Thank you for your concern in this matter.

Landon Forth  
Captain, Anchorage Fire Department  
[3320 Wells Circle](#)  
[Anchorage, AK 99508](#)



Sent from my iPhone





**From:** [Brian Kneaper](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79 Letter of Support  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 11:19:27 AM  
**Attachments:** [HB79 Letter of Support.docx](#)

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Hello,

Attached is my letter in support of HB79. I urge everyone to take action now on this bill.

Thank you,  
Brian Kneaper

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Justin Mack](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79 Support  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2020 3:29:47 PM

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2/23/20

House Finance Members,

I would like to discuss a growing concern for public safety within the State of Alaska. As you know, nearly half of all public safety workers now fall into the Tier IV retirement system. My concern is that this retirement system will not provide an adequate retirement for our frontline public safety workers, including firefighters, police officers, and State Troopers. This concern is shared by labor and management and has real financial consequences for the State and local municipalities in the form of recruitment and retention. The cost of training a new public safety member in the State is approximately \$190,000, which, in the past, was spread out over a 25-year career. We are now seeing our well-trained public safety members leave after five years, and the money which could be used for training and equipment, is now being used to recruit and train new officers. This also leaves our public safety departments with less experience as we continue to bring in newer members. This problem has been well stated by nearly every public safety department within the State, and there is no sign of this trend reversing without immediate action from the legislature and this committee.

Over the last 13 years, we have worked to find a solution that solves the recruitment and retention crisis and also protects the State from an unfunded liability. We are confident that House Bill 79 is a modest solution, provided at a reasonable cost. With a conservative fiscal approach that offers a modest benefit, I believe we can attract and retain the best public safety workers. I encourage you to hear and pass HB79, which provides a practical solution to this growing problem and sets the State up to be competitive again. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your work in Juneau.

Sincerely,

Justin Mack

Executive Board Representative

Anchorage Firefighters Local 1264

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [Lewis, Benjamin K.](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79 Support  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 9:15:10 PM

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To Whom It May Concern,

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

**From:** [Ivar Raven](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79 support  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 12:49:52 PM

---

Ivan M Voronin  
2710 Arboles Lane  
Fairbanks, AK 99709  
Police/Fire Officer at FAI

Attn House Finance Committee:

I wish to express my support for a public safety professional pension for Alaska. We are losing professionals day-by-day as fast as new hires are recruited and trained. This would be a step in the right direction to maintain our public safety forces in this state, and the wealth of experience of those who are the original members relegated to Tier IV. To expect people to stay in a public service position that is as demanding and risky as emergency services, the compensation needs to be at least as good as private industry and other states. I ask for your support of this bill and your action on it now, this year, without delay.

Thank you,  
Ivan

**From:** [Gunnar Romatz](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Saturday, February 29, 2020 12:23:34 PM

---

Dear Representative Knopp,

I am writing this email in support of HB79 in regards to improving the Tier IV retirement plan and am a constituent of Representative Knopp. I am a firefighter/paramedic working for Central Emergency Services in Soldotna and in our department alone, we have seen many great employees leaving our department and even our state due to the Tier IV retirement plan. Not only were they quality employees, but they are close friends to myself and many others in our department. Thank you for your time and your efforts,

Gunnar Romatz

**From:** [david.mount](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 4:29:53 PM

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I would like to voice my support for HB79 and respectfully ask that you consider supporting it. I have been working in the State of AK public safety sector for 12+ years and have seen first hand how incredibly hard it is to recruit and retain officers long term without a defined benefit retirement.

Respectfully,

David Mount

**From:** [Jim Tobin](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 1:08:14 PM

---

I am respectfully writing to support the passage of this bill as a registered voter. I will take note of how the legislators vote on this and my future votes will reflect upon their decisions, thank you for reading, James Tobin.

Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [Adam Biernat](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 11:17:09 PM

---

Dear House Finance Committee Members,

I am writing in support of House Bill 79 and urging you to take action now.

I work with many members that are tier 4 employees, who are now the majority of the workforce for an organization, and we all support HB 79.

Thank you for your thoughtful and diligent work.

Adam

**From:** [John M](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 9:23:55 PM

---

To the House Financing Committee,

I am writing today to urge you to pass HB 79 regarding a defined contribution retirement for Police and Firefighters.

I am a current employee with Anchorage Airport Police and Fire Department. This March will mark my eighth year. If you do the math that makes me a tier IV employee. My wife is also a public service employee and works with the Anchorage School District. She is a Tier II (TRS) employee. She has a defined benefit retirement as has worked with ASD for 17 years.

If it were not for her defined benefit retirement we would have left the state of Alaska years ago. There are many opportunities out there in other states for both professions that have the defined benefit retirement. Some jobs will pay for a move and some will also match year for year along with incentive for military years (as I am a combat veteran).

The defined benefit retirement is a highly sought after incentive and would broaden the pool of applicants coming in and also add to the retention and morale of all departments.

Thank you for your time and please consider this in your decision.

Sincerely,

John H. Maddy

**From:** [Nicholas Bowe](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 2:37:39 PM

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Hi, I work in Anchorage at the Anchorage Police Department, and over the last 8 years, I have seen a lot of new faces join the force. Unfortunately, some of the best of the new faces have stayed for just a few years and then pack up and move to the lower 48 where they can do a similar job and get better benefits. I know we have a pretty good pay scale here in Alaska compared to many places, but we also have a higher cost of living- especially when you take into consideration health care, vacation costs, shipping of goods and parts etc. While I realize that living in the last great state comes with a price, I think there are ways to make it come with peace of mind as well. Everyone of they people that I have talked to who have left our department and state, cite the same reasons- a pension and medical benefits after retirement. Some have told me that they would be happy to rely on the current retirement plans i.e. 401K, 457, PERS IV etc., if there was a medical package with it. I realize that money is tight and everyone has ideas to help the government spend what little there is, but I truly believe that implementing a defined benefits plan in the state of Alaska would be a huge asset and would pay dividends with QUALITY employee retention. I'm 35, and I have been thinking alot about what the future holds and whether I should take a job in the lower 48 where I can have more predictability with the costs of retirement- healthcare being the largest unpredictable factor. PLEASE do all of us in the public safety group - and I think each community as well- a favor and make this dream of a better retirement system a reality. Sincerely, Officer N. Bowe

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

**From:** [Martin, Dennis J. II](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 11:48:39 AM

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I am writing you today to express my concern of the tier IV retirement plan. Alaska could recruit the best people from all over the world under previous retirement plans. Under Tier IV plans we have seen our communities Police and Fire departments turn into training grounds for other states and cities to recruit from. Valuable tax dollars are being wasted training people that don't stay in our cities for their entire career. I am asking the House Finance Committee to take action on HB79 Now. It is a fair compromise to the Tier IV system.

Thank you  
Dennis Martin  
Anchorage

**From:** [Taylor Webster](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 10:28:06 AM

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To whom it may concern,

I have worked with the Anchorage Police Department for coming on 5 years. During that time I have had fellow academy mates leave due to the retirement we are faced with. My friends and co workers have left law enforcement all together and left the state due to the retirement. Apart of being a first responder is having an incentive at the end of our hard work during our career. I am giving myself and my family two years to get a pension or we will be leaving the state to go to other department where I have friends that are making equal pay with similar benefits and a pension (I.E. Richardson Texas, Pullman, Washington).

Anchorage PD is going through a very high turnover due to the issue of no pension. It is going to reach a point that APD is going to have officers with hardly any experience running the department due to retention.

Not to sound needed, but we ALASKA officers deserve better.

Officer Webster  
DSN 63035

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [greg smith](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 9:59:05 AM

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Having been a police officer in Florida prior to moving to Alaska, Pensions were something every department offered. It was not only something that kept officers at the department but also a strong reason to pick one over another. I have made many good friends in my time here at APD and am saddened everytime I lose one of those people to another agency in the lower 48 simply because they offer a pension. Please support HB79 so we stop losing the hundreds of thousands of dollars we spend on training good officers just to see them leave for a pension.

Ofc. G. Smith

**From:** [Josiah Streff](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 8:51:57 AM

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Good morning,

My name is Josiah Streff and I am a Police Officer with the Anchorage Police Department. I am emailing to ask for the Committee to support HB79 as I believe there will be resounding benefits to doing so.

I have served with the Anchorage Police Department for almost 3 years now solely as a patrol officer. I have attended department training including the Canine Agitator course and the shotgun course. I am also qualified in less lethal munitions and am in the process of becoming a Field Training Officer. The Anchorage Police Department has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in me and my coworkers.

Our pay is sufficient but most of us are police officers for something than the paycheck. Police officers, as well as firefighters, have a difficult job that involves more than just going to work for 10+ hours a day. The job requires our full dedication and full attentiveness while we are at work. We constantly are in danger of being injured by people who want to do us ill-will and those who aren't attentive while driving. When the day is done, we can't just go home and forget about everything we did or saw at work. Additionally, working in a harsh climate like Alaska requires additional dedication to the job. Standing on a perimeter in -10 degrees for hours or tending to an individual as it's snowing makes the job harder for all involved.

That being said, there is no incentive for police officers or firefighters to stay in Alaska and not leave for out of state departments. While our pay is good, we have lack luster retirement plans with no defined benefits as well as no medical benefits. My peer group is officers who have been at APD for 2-4 years, with the vast majority of us being under 30 years old. I would estimate that approximately 50% of officers in that group have a plan to leave the department within the next 2 years. The general consensus is that without a pension, we will not stay. I can almost guarantee that I personally will not stay without a pension. I am already in the process of looking at other agencies that offer a defined benefit. The state continues to have a hard time recruiting and retaining quality officers.

A pension is important to me and other first responders. I hope the Committee recognizes that without it, quality employees will continue to leave. The State and local economies will continue to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars to see the employees leave to go better another state, saving that state money. Alaska should be trying to encourage first responders to come to Alaska and stay, not leave.

Respectfully,  
Josiah Streff

**From:** [adam](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 8:42:43 AM

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Good morning,

I am writing you in support of HB79. I am not going to go into comparison between specific aspects of HB79 vs our current retirement system, but rather will explain why I think this is important for Alaska.

As a police officer here for the last several years I have seen first hand our recruitment numbers plummet. Let's face it, being a police officer is becoming less and less appealing to many people these days. Additionally I have had several coworkers leave, some out of state for employment opportunities that offer better benefits/pay/retirement. Although I don't believe there is one magical solution to our problem of hiring and keeping quality personnel, I strongly feel HB79 is a step in the right direction. I ask for your backing and support of this bill, it makes a big difference to those of us working as first responders.

Thank you,  
Adam Ronchetti

Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [Stiller, Mark R.](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 7:55:52 PM

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Dear House Finance Committee members,

My name is Mark Stiller, I currently work for the Anchorage Fire Department as an apparatus engineer. I have been an AFD employee for almost 18 years. I am writing today to encourage the finance committee to support HB79. This bill is good for public safety in Alaska and ultimately the communities we serve.

It is alarming the high number of young firemen and police officers that are getting trained in the state and then taking their valuable skills to other states that have a defined benefit retirement. I don't know the exact cost of training a new candidate from start to finish but i know it is a lot of money.

A defined retirement benefit, I believe would keep a lot of these valuable employees here in Alaska to serve. The tier IV retirement system is inadequate for public safety here in Alaska.

I understand that there will be some kind of cost in passing HB79. I also believe that it will be money well spent on public safety in Alaska!

I encourage each of you to help push HB79 through the legislative process so it can be debated on the House and Senate floors. With your help I believe this bill can help us retain great people who want to serve the communities around Alaska. Thank you for your continued hard work!

Sincerely,  
Mark Stiller

[REDACTED]

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 4:01:20 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I am contacting the committee to let you all know I am in support of HB79. I want to encourage you to take action on this bill now. I believe it is in the best interest of the state to do so. People so often look at the costs/ cost increase of a bill like this and immediately reject it, but I believe HB79 will actually save the state money in the long run. The enormous costs of training folks that leave in less than a year or two, in search of better retirement, is exponentially increasing. When tier 4 began the long term effects were not fully appreciated. Now a dozen years later we are getting a better view of the full picture, and it's not good. Highly qualified folks turning down offers of employment where several of their own family members work and accepting employment in Washington state due to defined pension.

Thanks for taking action now

Steve Walters

**From:** [Emily Greensfelder](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 9:36:23 AM

---

**Dear House Finance Committee,**

**I am in support of HB79 and urge you to take action NOW!**

**This bill will directly affect our growing family.**

**We have and continue to entertain the benefits of leaving the state for employment with another fire department that offers a pension to set our family up for financial success.**

**We have grandparents, aunts and uncles in the Anchorage Municipality and the lack of a defined benefit for public safety is threatening to tear our family apart.**

**Please, act NOW!**

**Sincerely,  
Emily Greensfelder**

**From:** [Chelsea Jasinski](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 3:55:10 AM

---

To whom it may concern,

I strongly urge the committee to pass HB 79. HB 79 is vital to support those civil servants who serve our communities daily. It will give them a defined benefit retirement (a pension). This is crucial if we as a community wish to retain our civil servants who protect our communities.

Thank you,  
Chelsea Jasinski

**From:** [Michelle Greensfelder](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2020 8:39:11 PM

---

To the Alaska Legislature of 2020,

I am writing you concerning HB79 and it's importance in securing our safety and future.

As a constituent, veteran, and mother I have concerns in the safety and security of our nation as well as our neighborhoods. To provide the safety and security needed, we as a community require trained and dedicated professionals ready to respond to emergencies. In that light, we as a community, train and employ the best we can find. The problem is, it is getting harder to find these individuals. The reasons are varied, but much of it comes down to lack of futures.

Without a retirement system to count on, we are training our best and brightest only to have them stolen later by other states. My family was almost split between states when a lateral position became available for my son, a firefighter. Being a father and husband, he is concerned about his family being provided for and retirement benefits are an important part of that concern.

The bottom line is we can either invest in our public safety professionals and their futures now, or we can continue to spend millions more to train and then lose them. The moral and fiscally conservative choice is to fund this bill.

Sincerely,

Michelle Greensfelder

**From:** [Bruce Markwood](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2020 6:20:30 PM

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House Finance Committee

Hi my name is Bruce Markwood. I am a veteran firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department. I am fortunate, I am on my 19th year with AFD and looking forward to a retirement with benefits as a trade off for the sacrifices I have made. Please allow my younger colleagues the to benefit for their sacrifices as well by acting on HB79.

Thank you

Bruce Markwood  
AFD 5A Engineer

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [zack pettit](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2020 4:35:19 PM

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Members of the House Finance Committee, My name is Zachary Pettit, I am a life long alaskan and a father to two. Beyond being known as a father and husband. I am a professional career firefighter. I have spent close to 12 years serving my community. I work at Fire Station 4 on Tudor Rd, as a paramedic and firefighter I staff two of the busiest apparatus in the entire state. Our number of emergency responses per apparatus regularly eclipse 4000 calls per year. I am one of few that was able to start my career fairly young and my hope is to serve for 25-30 years. Unfortunately, If HB 79 is not passed, this goal with simply not be feasible. Without a defined benefit for my service and lack of finances to cover the growing cost of healthcare, retirement at the age of 55 will not be possible. The current Tier IV plan is costing this state dearly, it's a clear lack of attention to the needs of public service employees and if not replaced, we as a state will continue to lose employees to other states. In addition to losing employees, recruitment with continue to suffer, prospective employees will not only have to be willing to sacrifice their lives for the public, but do so without the added protection of a defined benefit and secure healthcare. I urge you to pass this bill, because by not doing so will only continue the hemorrhaging of people leaving this state, only worsening the economic outlook of Alaska. As my elected officials and leadership of our state, this is your opportunity to show your commitment to the public safety community.

Currently I am looking for another department with a defined plan. I don't feel like the state supports me, my peers, or my family. The fact that I can work 30 plus years in a job that is known to increase the risk of cancer, keeps me away from my family, deprives me of sleep and every shift there is the likelihood that I may not come home just doesn't sit well with me anymore. The truth is if this bill doesn't go through, I will have no choice but to leave this state and find employment elsewhere for the betterment of my family. You have had time and your time is up for me.

Your dedicated public employee,

Zack Pettit

**From:** [Tyler Greensfelder](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2020 4:20:00 PM

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House Finance Committee,

My name is Tyler Greensfelder and I work for The Anchorage Fire Department. I am writing you to discuss and inform you of the dire state of the PERS Tier 4 system. This current Tier 4 retirement system is flawed in many ways. Many people, like myself, are lifelong Alaskans and couldn't picture ever leaving this state. After working in this career field for over 5 years now and doing simple math, even maxing out our retirement accounts, which many aren't able to do, I would still not be enough money to retire, especially being at the mercy of the unpredictable stock market. I personally have lost three great friends to departments of the lower 48. I'm newly married, have a newborn son, twins in the way and with potentially more cuts to education and state services and no defined benefit retirement, what keeps a young person like me, here anymore? The DPS did a study and summarized we are losing millions of dollars every year on public employee workers leaving the state, pre-retirement age, with over 70% leaving for somewhere else with a defined benefit retirement. I am at a point in my career that I am fully vested and am considering leaving but having a defined benefit retirement would be instrumental in my decision to stay here.

Over the last 10 plus years we have continually been working on coming up with a solution to fix the lack of defined benefit retirement for public safety employees. As first responders, our job is to identify a problem and fix it. This problem has taken a while to be solved, pushing us to try to become retirement plan experts but I truly feel that that House Bill 79, which is being sponsored by Representative Chuck Kopp, is the answer to that problem. Through a conservative approach and a modest benefit this bill will undoubtedly help Alaskan public safety departments not only recruit the best employees out there but it will retain those employees and their expertise. We are basing this plan off the top plans in the nation which are proven to work. This plan reduces unfunded liability to the state and gives the state many different levers to pull in order to keep this plan successful.

In closing, I ask you to consider what is the cost of inaction to this problem? Would you want a 65 year old firefighter, or trooper, who is still working because they can't retire yet, coming to help you? How many more people are we willing to lose to Washington, Idaho, and Colorado? How much more money is the state willing to hemorrhage by not fixing this problem? I am asking for your full support for this bill that will positively impact the state, the Anchorage Fire Department, and my family.

Thank you for your full support on this bill and for taking immediate action.



Sincerely,

Tyler Greensfelder  
Constituent District 11

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Lucas Michael](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79  
**Date:** Monday, March 2, 2020 11:48:59 AM

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I am writing to support HB79 as a constituent to Rep. Knopp. Alaska is losing a lot of local Firefighter/paramedics to other states because of better retirement plans. With the current system once guys and gals are vested they are leaving for greener pastures in the lower 48 states. With that being said Alaska departments are using up money and time to train these FF/paramedics just to see them leave. Departments state wide are having trouble finding and hiring qualified paramedics due to the lack of a decent retirement plan. There is nothing keeping people here because after five years they can leave and work elsewhere without losing anything.

**From:** [Cameron Gregg](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB-79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 11:20:53 AM

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**Dear House Finance Committee,**

I am writing you today to express a growing concern for public safety within the State of Alaska. As I'm sure you are already aware, nearly half of Alaska's public safety personnel fall in the Tier IV retirement system. The numbers of Tier IV don't lie, and I am extremely concerned that its inadequacies will have a severe negative impact the retirement of firefighters, police officers, and state troopers.

Not only will the Tier IV system provide inadequate retirement and uncertainty to public safety professionals but, that same feeling of uncertainty is causing employees to seek employment out of state. Public safety employees are able to find jobs in the lower 48 with comparable pay, benefits, and a defined benefit retirement system. I often find myself wondering why I should stay here and question my well-being in retirement when I could find employment out of state that pays the same and provides a defined benefit plan.

I am not the only public safety employee that has this same concern and feeling of uncertainty. Police officers and firefighters are leaving the state at alarming rates in search of a defined benefit system. This has real financial consequences for the state and local municipalities in the form of recruitment and retention. The cost of training a new public safety member in the state is approximately \$190,000. In the past this cost has been spread out over a 25 year career for most employees. These days we are seeing that \$190,000 be spread out over an average of 5 years. This is a direct result of employees seeking employment out of state that provides a defined benefit. Not only are there severe financial impacts from this but, this leaves our public safety personnel with less experience while we continually hire and train new employees to replace the ones that leave. This trend has no end in sight unless action is taken to retain public safety employees in the state.

There is a solution that has been in the making for over 12 years now. House Bill 79 offers a solution through a conservative approach and a modest benefit in an effort retain our highly trained public safety personnel. I ask that you please support House Bill 79 so that we can fix the inadequacies of the Tier IV system and set the state up to be competitive again. Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter. I cannot truly express how much your efforts on this issue mean to us.

Sincerely,

Cameron Gregg

Anchorage Firefighter Local 1264



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB79: Teacher & Firefighter parents not recommending same careers in Alaska to their Children.  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 3, 2020 9:12:06 AM

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Hello, i'm hoping to come at you from a different angle pertaining to House Bill 79.

Im asking you to help get this bill passed. Both me and my wife have deep roots here in Alaska, were both born and raised here, we have lots of family here and a very special historical property which we hope to keep in the family for future generations. Our kids love it here and hope to find good careers here so that they too can settle in for the long haul in the State that they were born in.

My wife and i are both in defined benefit Pers and Ters. Going a few years back we started asking our kids what they would be interested in doing for a career. Naturally, both kids expressed interest in doing what we do. Our son wanted to be Firefighter and Daughter wanted to be a Teacher.

My wife and i both enjoy our jobs, but sadly neither of us would recommend that our kids pursue these jobs here in Alaska. It's a sad day when parents have to steer their offspring away from careers which the parents know that their kids would love.

Both of us have seen several dozen non-defined benefit co-workers leave their jobs after only a few years on the job. The catalyst for all of these people was due to the lack of a retirement.. no pension and no health care.

On a related note, i have a niece whom was born and raised in Palmer. About 7 years ago she left Alaska to attend college in Iowa. While there she met and married a young man whom is now 3 years into his career as a Police officer in Olathe, Kansas. Our niece has been determined for many years to come back to Alaska. About a year ago her husband called and asked me about joining APD as APD was about to start taking applications for lateral transfers. I told Derrick, my nieces husband, that he should NOT apply because he currently has a defined benefit retirement. Anyway, thats just another sad example of what the current retirement system is doing.

Please consider changing the current Tier4 so that we can recruit quality employees and retain the good ones that we currently have, and so that my kids can pursue their dreams here in the beautiful State of Alaska.

Respectfully,  
Corey & Amy Roberts  
PERS Tier 3 / TERS Tier 2  
Anchorage Fire Dept. / MSB School Dist.

**From:** [David Walker](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB791  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 8:34:11 PM

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I am writing in support of house bill 791HB791  
Please take action on this bill now.  
Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Eric Harvey](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79 (Please Approve)  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 6:40:23 PM

---

I strongly support House Bill 79 (HB79). The House Finance Committee should approve this bill now. Tier IV Public Safety Employees are not adequately compensated for risky, dangerous and difficult work. Alaska needs competent, well trained, and qualified public safety employees. Alaska needs to provide competitive and fair compensation to attract and retain qualified personnel. Please approve HB79.

**From:** [Susan Harvey](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79 (Please Approve)  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 6:34:43 PM

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I strongly support House Bill 79 (HB79). The House Finance Committee should approve this bill now. Tier IV Public Safety Employees are not adequately compensated for risky, dangerous and difficult work. Alaska needs competent, well trained, and qualified public safety employees. Alaska needs to provide competitive and fair compensation to attract and retain qualified personnel. Please approve HB79.

Susan Harvey  
PO Box 771026  
Eagle River, Alaska 99577

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [Ryann Rodenberger](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79 (Please Approve)  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 6:42:29 PM

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I strongly support House Bill 79 (HB79). The House Finance Committee should approve this bill now. Tier IV Public Safety Employees are not adequately compensated for risky, dangerous and difficult work. Alaska needs competent, well trained, and qualified public safety employees. Alaska needs to provide competitive and fair compensation to attract and retain qualified personnel. Please approve HB79.

Ryann Harvey- Anchorage resident



Reply

Reply all

Forward



**From:** [Max Harvey](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79 please approve  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 6:44:04 PM

---

I am writing to you today in regards to my support of House Bill 79. I am a Tier IV employee and am greatly concerned about our current retirement system. I share these concerns with many, many other Tier IV employees and the need for a solution is critical. We recognize there is a cost to this bill but the cost to do nothing is much greater. I am in the Public Safety sector as a Firefighter/EMT, and Tier IV has proven time and time again to be inadequate. There are many costly issues by having this inadequate retirement system. I have witnessed many times the state waste time and money on training employees who then leave the state in search of a better retirement. I know for a fact that there are many employees in Public Safety that are actively searching for other employment out of state as we speak. Not only are we losing highly trained employees, we are struggling to recruit new employees. We are no longer competitive in our hiring process. This is very concerning because by having a highly competitive hiring process we can obtain the most effective and desired first responders. We need to have the best of the best responding in emergent situations, which will ultimately provide for the best safety of the community. I am concerned for the longevity of our Fire/ Police department employees. We are in a profession that has the potential to be very dangerous and poses risks to health and well-being of employees. Working a 30 year career with the lack of an adequate retirement system is terrifying. After putting your mind and body on the line every day at work, Tier IV employees should be able to rest easy with an adequate retirement as a goal. House Bill 79 would be the solution we need to retain employees, increase recruitment, and provide an adequate retirement to the men and women who devote their lives to protecting and serving the community we love.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Max Harvey – Anchorage Resident [REDACTED]

-Max Harvey

**From:** [Nick D](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79 support  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 5:18:53 PM

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Good afternoon House Finance Committee, My name is Nichalas Davis and I am a firefighter who currently works in Anchorage and has worked in the Alaska fire service for nearly 25 years. I am asking for your support of HB 79 and securing a retirement for the men and women of public safety/Alaska. Securing a future for all of us after our time served will free our minds of distractions and allow all of us to focus more on the task at hand.

Thank You,

Nichalas Davis

P.O. Box 186  
Seldovia, AK 99663



**From:** [Charles Potter](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79 support  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 1:38:17 PM

---

My name is Charles Potter and I am a life long Alaskan, born and raised in Anchorage. In 2011, I joined the Anchorage Fire Department to support our community as a firefighter. As a current Tier IV member, I'm writing you today in support of House Bill (HB) 79 and why I feel that it's important for the House Finance Committee to take action on this issue.

Nearly half of our State's public safety employees fall under the current Tier IV retirement system. This system does not provide an adequate or competitive retirement for our State's firefighters, police officers and Troopers which has resulted in lowered recruitment, lowered retention of trained and experienced employees, and subsequently, challenges with adequate staffing throughout all of our public safety sectors.

The current retirement system and subsequent low retention is also financially burdensome. The cost of training a new public safety employee is approximately \$190,000, spread out over that individual's 25 year career. Current trends show that newer Tier IV employees are leaving the state after an average of 5 years of service in search of a more competitive retirement system. With each loss, Alaska loses its trained employees to other states and must start over with a new recruitment.

This cyclical epidemic that has begun to plague the public safety sector will only continue if something isn't done to address the need for a change to a defined benefit system. HB 79 is a practical solution to this growing problem and I encourage your support on this issue. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter.

Sincerely,

Charles Potter

Firefighter/EMT

Anchorage Fire Department

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Josh Novinska](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 9:56:10 PM

---

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing this letter today in support of House Bill 79. As a lifelong Alaskan I find our current retirement for Tier IV members to be less than acceptable. I have been with the Anchorage Fire Department for 7 years; this has been my dream department in a state that I love and never want to leave. However, I am actively searching for job opportunities outside of the state that are willing to offer me, and a future family the stability that comes with having a retirement I can count on in the future. This has been my home and I want to keep it that way, but with no end in sight to fix the retirement system for me or my peers there is no guarantee to retain the investment the state has made. I have watched as many of my peers have left their jobs in the public safety sector in Alaska to venture out to states that have a retirement system that is suitable for their needs and the needs of their family. I am asking for the future of Alaska and the future of the people who put their lives on the line every day for you and your loved ones, to support their efforts by supporting house bill 79.

Sincerely,

Josh Novinska

**From:** [Fisher, Noel J.](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House bill 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 7:18:32 AM

---

Dear House Finance Committee,

I know that by this point, you have received many similar emails to this one that I am now sending. I am sure that all the letters share a similar format and message, and unfortunately I can't guarantee that mine is in any way unique. After saying that, if you have read up to this point I would like to say "Thank You" and would encourage you to continue and I will do my best to keep it short.

I am writing this letter because I am new member of the Anchorage Fire Department. Although I am very blessed to be a part of an amazing organization and I feel that the compensation is fair; I still can't help but feel uneasy about my outlook for retirement. House Bill 79 would erase my concerns as well as be an answer to many obstacles that our current state retirement system faces under Tier IV. The state and municipal governments have been bleeding money over the past 13 years under the Tier IV system. Countless dollars are spent and then lost when Alaska trained employees leave for "greener pastures" within other states that have more competitive retirement systems. The waste is not only seen in the cost of training their replacement, but there is the unmeasurable hit to the state, not only do they lose that one employee, but in most cases, an entire productive family leaves with them, which delivers a devastating blow to the economic health and future of the community in which they reside. There are many additional benefits to House Bill 79, but in an effort to live up to my previous promise to keep it short, I will stop here and leave you with this one last reminder. House Bill 79 will save the state and local governments MONEY in the long run. Tier IV requires a solution and that solution is House Bill 79. I urge you to take action on this bill and that you would continue to move it through the legislative process. Lastly, I want to thank you for your service to Alaska's government and I appreciate that you took the time to read my letter.

Regards,

Noel Fisher

**From:** [jeremiah gilliland](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House bill 79  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2020 5:18:26 PM

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House Finance Committee,

I would like to once again express my support of HB-79 the same as I did last year in hopes of seeing it move forward. I have been an Anchorage firefighter for just over 12 years, it's an amazing career and I wouldn't trade it for any other career. We have an amazing group of individuals on our department and I'd like to keep it that way in the future. I was in the first group at AFD to be hired under the new Tier 4 retirement system. This has affected me my entire career and casts serious doubts onto my ability to safely retire at a reasonable age. Over the course of my career I've seen good individuals hire here and leave as a direct result of a lacking retirement system; and individuals decide to just not test here as a result of a lacking retirement system. I'm very concerned for all of the individuals that make up Tier 4. I'm concerned that under that system we no longer attract the highest quality individuals, and that as a state we are missing out on truly incredible people that look elsewhere for a more financially and medically stable future in their retirement. The time of one's life that is supposed to be the easiest, the safest, and the most stable. The current retirement plan and that last statement are incompatible with each other. Please move forward with a HB-79 which is a much more reasonable, stable, and secure option for the future of Alaska's workforce. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, Jeremiah Gilliland

**From:** [JakeTweit](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 9:19:44 PM  
**Attachments:** [HB79 Support Letter.pages](#)

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See Attachment

**From:** [Melissa Walker](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 8:52:48 PM

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House Finance Committee,

I am writing in support of HB79. I urge you to please take action on this bill now. Fixing tier 4 should be a priority to help secure public service personnel for the future of the State of Alaska. It will help to create a more competitive market to attract the best of the best public service employees and entice them to stay in the state. They will then in turn be spending money and investing in the state of Alaska for the long term and not short term. If you do not fix tier 4 Alaska will become a state to build a resume to use somewhere else with a retirement system. The state needs public service employees investing in our states future for the long term.

In complete support of HB79. Please take action now.

Respectfully,

Melissa Novinska-Walker  
Eagle River resident and voter.



**From:** [Krystal Hoke](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 8:47:27 PM

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To Whom it May Concern;

I am writing in support of HB 79.

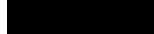
Although Alaska is very rich in natural resources, Alaskans are the most valuable asset.

If the current structure continues, Alaska will finance the expensive training required to prepare safety workers without long term results. Many of these individuals will end up leaving the state in search of defined benefits and meaningful retirement. In this cycle, Alaska sucks up the huge initial costs while other states reap the long term benefit of a trained, ready and able employee. Alaska again recruits, hires and trains new people, in a never ending cycle where we will end up exporting our best talent.

I encourage you to take care of the people who take care of others. Keep our people in our state.

Thank you,

Krystal Hoke



**From:** [Joshua Walker](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 8:22:56 PM

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House Finance Committee,

I am writing in support of HB79 and I am respectfully asking that this committee takes action on this bill now. The people this bill would support have supported us through all of our worst times and moments and it only feels right that we show them we appreciate it by supporting this bill and doing what feels right. They have always been here for us and now this is a chance for us to be there for them. I plead with you once again to please take action immediately on HB79. We will be watching.

Respectfully,

Josh Walker  
Eagle River Alaska resident. Long time Alaskan voter and resident.

**From:** [David Lanpher](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 5:03:05 PM

---

28 February 2020

Subject: House Bill 79

Dear House Finance Committee,

My name is David Lanpher, I have been a resident of the great State of Alaska for over ten years. I am a member of the Anchorage Fire Department, proudly serving as a firefighter / EMT since 2017. I am writing in full support of House Bill 79 and to urge the House Finance Committee to take action on this bill by continuing to move it through the legislative process.

House Bill 79 is important to me because it provides a solution to the Tier IV retirement system. I have growing concerns for public safety within the State of Alaska regarding the inadequacies surrounding the current Tier IV retirement system. Financial modeling on Tier IV by the State of AK Department of Revenue clearly shows that Tier IV is an inadequate retirement system for public safety professionals. Modeled success rates of 22% after a 30-year police/fire career is flat out unacceptable. This potentially means that 88 out of every 100 people retiring from the Tier IV system will not have the funds to sustain 30 years past retirement. This has a direct financial impact to the State and local municipalities in the form of recruitment and retention.

Since the implementation of Tier IV, Alaska has suffered a steady reduction in applicants seeking public safety jobs in the State. The recruitment and retention crisis clearly illustrates that Alaska is no longer able to compete with retirement systems offered by departments outside of Alaska. The Tier IV retirement plan is basically nonexistent when compared to defined-benefit plans offered by public safety departments in several of the lower 48 states. Furthermore, it is apparent that many well-trained Tier IV public safety professionals are leaving the state after a few years for lateral employment with departments offering a far more stable, secure, and superior defined-benefit retirement system.

Alaska is paying a significant cost to train these professionals just to see them leave for other public safety careers. As a result of this employment revolving door, public safety departments in Alaska are forced to operate every day with diminished experience within the ranks. Experience is a vital component in career development and progression within the public safety career path. Learning from highly qualified peers and mentors while training or responding to emergencies is paramount in the career progression of those who serve in public safety. Public safety professionals in Alaska go to work every day with one goal, to

provide exceptional service to the community. However, as experience within the ranks declines that goal of exceptional service becomes exponentially more challenging. The community suffers, the public safety professionals suffer, and the State suffers.

During the past twelve years significant work and progress has been achieved toward resolving the problems associated with the Tier IV retirement system. Problems which include the recruitment and retention crisis as well as safeguarding the State against an unfunded liability. Tier IV requires a solution and House Bill 79 is just that. I believe that House Bill 79 offers a conservative approach with a modest defined-benefit which will be instrumental in attracting and retaining the best public safety professionals nationwide. The financial cost associated with this bill is recognized but the overall cost of doing nothing will be much greater.

I encourage you to support House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to these growing problems and sets the State of Alaska up to become competitive for public safety recruitment and retention again. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your dedicated efforts to solve problems in our great state.

Sincerely,

David Lanpher  
Constituent District 23

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [Steven Butts](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 4:33:12 PM

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Dear House Finance Committee,

My name is Steven Butts and I am a Probationary Firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department. I am almost 1 month away from finishing probation.

I am writing you all to voice support of House Bill 79 and requesting that you take action on it. The Tier IV program has been proven to be an inadequate system for the public safety sector. I believe this because it has cost the state money to train new employees just for them to leave the state and use that training to serve other communities that offer more competitive retirement plans.

I understand that this bill comes with a cost, but stopping the continual loss of good employees that the state has paid to train is worth that cost.

Thank you very much for your time.

-Steven Butts

**From:** [Sam Guzauskas](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 2:16:31 PM

---

House Finance Committee,

I am writing this email to let you know that I support HB 79 and would like you to take action now!

Thank you,  
Sam Guzauskas

**From:** [Jeff Bugh](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 11:13:24 AM

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Hello, I'm writing an email in support of House Bill 79.

I'm a local firefighter. I'm also a husband and hopefully soon a new father. I enjoy working in the community that I was raised in and I want to continue working here. If I were to look financially at my best options however, it would be obvious that Anchorage is not my best option.

I enjoy working here and it is an honor to serve my community, but I also have to balance that with the necessity of supporting my family short and long-term. I feel that passing this bill will allow me to support my family as well as increase the amount of people we have that are trained, experienced, and quality coming into the Anchorage Fire Department and Anchorage as a whole.

It's obvious that we are not a competitive contender for recruitment into the fire service with our current benefits, and I would like to see that changed.

Thanks for your time!

Jeff

**From:** [Dalton Bunes](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 9:17:38 PM

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Hello,

I wanted to contact you and let you know that I fully support HB79. Working in this field I can say I have seen a huge difference in the change from pension to 401k. Significantly less employees stay for a full career as they are other agencies out of state with comparable pay and pensions. A pension program would make our state competitive with those other agencies and assist in recruiting and retention.

The longer we wait as a state the longer we are putting off hiring the best candidates and the more we lose. I urge you to consider and approve a pension plan now. I am in a police department and this would greatly influence my career and ability to provide a secure future for my family.

Thank you for taking the time to read the many responses I'm sure you're getting.

Very respectfully,  
Dalton Bunes



**From:** [peter.hawbaker](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 7:43:46 PM

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I am writing in support of House Bill 79, the fix for the Tier 4 retirement system. I have observed first hand the detrimental effect that the current defined contribution Tier 4 retirement system has had on retaining employees. As a field training officer, I see numerous new recruits and officers receiving expensive training, then moving on to departments in the lower 48 after becoming certified. Especially in today's climate, it is extremely difficult to attract and retain new officers, and the State of Alaska's current retirement system is a serious handicap in this problem.

As such, I urge you to take action now and support House Bill 79.

Thank You,

Peter Hawbaker  
Officer, Fairbanks Airport Police and Fire Department.

**From:** [Fox, Kyle J.](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 4:58:31 PM

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February 27, 2020

To whom this may concern,

I am a Firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department and I am writing you to show my support for the upcoming HB79 bill. It is vital for me to have a prosperous and fair retirement. Currently, we have no defined retirement which is concerning and quite frankly, unfair to myself and my fellow first responders. As first responders, we constantly put ourselves in harms way to help others; we risk our lives in an effort to keep Anchorage a safe place. I hope that we can receive a defined retirement plan for our efforts.

Some highlights of HB79

### **Good for Alaska**

#### Safeguard Mechanisms to Adjust Contributions and PRPA

- o Employee contributions set by ARM Board with a range of 8%-10%
- o Post Pension Retirement Adjustments (PRPA aka Inflation Protection) may be withheld if plan funding is less than 90%

#### Minimum Retirement Age

- o Retirement Age of 55 years old with 20 years of service is established, or age 60 years old if vested with less than 20 years of service
- o Final average salary calculation increased to 5 years vs. 3 years

#### HRA Tier IV Medical

- o Retirement medical coverage remains the same as Tier IV -3% of average PERS salary contributed to Health Retirement Account (HRA)

### **Makes Alaska Competitive**

#### Recruitment and Retention

- o Alaska's peace officers and firefighters are leaving our state in alarming numbers for other states offering defined benefit retirements after having received costly training and experience in Alaska. This is evident in the recent Alaska Department of Public Safety Recruitment and Retention Plan Overview 2018-2023 and the experience of police and fire departments across the state.

#### Offers Stability in Retirement

o Several states, such as Washington and Wisconsin, offer DB retirement plans for public safety that are fully funded and stable. Conservative and hybrid DB plans offer financial stability for the State and a secure retirement benefit to current and prospective Public Safety Officers and Firefighters.

#### Ability to Attract Public Safety from Across the Country

o Based on the DPS Plan Overview referenced above, “prospective candidates report they find agencies outside of Alaska more appealing due to the defined benefit retirement package offered by some other states”.

### **Good for Public Safety Employees**

#### Hybrid Plan with DB Benefits and DC Medical

o Employees receive the benefits of a DB plan such as professional money management, lower plan fees, pooled risk, and long term investment horizon.

#### Ability to Budget in Retirement and Supplement During Career

o By factoring years of service and HRA medical, public safety employees can project and budget for retirement needs.

#### Minimum 20-year Career and Retirement Age of 55

o Public safety employees experience shorter careers due to the significant physical and mental demands inherent in public safety work. Risk of injury and costly worker’s compensation claims are reduced when employees do not feel compelled to work beyond a full career in public safety.

Sincerely,  
Kyle Fox

**From:** [Evan Kressly](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 4:16:05 PM

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House Finance Committee,

My name is Evan and I am a firefighter/EMT with the City of Anchorage Fire Department. I'm writing you in support of House Bill 79.

I'm grew up in the state of Alaska, my family lives in Anchorage and Alaska has been home to us for the last 23 years. I'm beyond grateful to work for such a progressive fire department. This is where I want to stay, raise a family and eventually retire. When I talk to my good friends who are firefighters in states such as Washington, Tennessee, Georgia, California and Illinois, they consistently talk about the pension retirement plan they have and the retirement security it provides them and their families. Having these conversations with my friends can make it hard for someone in their mid 20's and a Tier 4 member, like myself, to not be interested in these job opportunities and pensions these states provide. You have my full support for HB79 and I believe this bill will provide stability and consistency for the State of Alaska.

I want to thank you for you time and consideration on House Bill 79.

Thank you  
Evan Kressly

**From:** [Christopher Darling](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 3:51:55 PM

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House Finance Committee,

My name is Chris and I am a new firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department. I'm writing you in support of House Bill 79.

I'm originally from Washington state, my family lives in Anchorage and Alaska has been home to us for the last 14 years or so. I'm beyond grateful to work for such a great fire department here in Anchorage. This is where I want to stay, raise a family and retire. When I talk to my good friends who are firefighters in states such as Washington, they consistently talk about the pension retirement plan they have and the retirement security it provides them and their families. Having these conversations with my friends can make it hard for someone in their early 30's and a Tier 4 member, like myself, to not be interested in these job opportunities and pensions these states provide.

I want to thank you for your time and consideration on House Bill 79.

Thank you,

Chris Darling

**From:** [Brady Deal](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 12:01:15 PM

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Hi,

My name is Brady Deal. I am a first generation firefighter and have been with AFD for a little over a year now. I have been diligent in providing money towards 457's and 401K's and I am beginning to realized that many people around me and before me have not been as proactive whether it is personal reasons, financial reasons, etc. I am a single male but I can imagine a employee with a family has a very hard time putting away enough money for retirement. I believe HB79 will be very Beneficial for our workforce for several reasons. It is a great hybrid bill that is will be supported by the economy as we see swings in the coming years. Many people in our department or applying for our department go out of state or lateral transfer to have the benefit of a pension. This will make a more competitive workforce and keep our workers in Alaska.

I am in full support of this bill and am emailing to voice my support to keep it moving forward.

With respect,  
Brady Deal

**From:** [paul badalich](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 11:28:13 AM

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Dear House Finance Committee,

Please consider passing HB79 out of Committee for general vote. I'm a 20 year Firefighter in Anchorage, under PERS Tier 3. I can state from observation over time that it is harder to recruit and, more importantly, retain Tier 4 personnel...Fire Departments all over the nation are offering comparable packages with defined benefits and luring our people away.

My understanding is that APD is having a similar experience.

Please move HB79 forward.

Thank you for considering,  
Paul Badalich

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Wescott, Shayne A.](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 9:28:19 AM

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All,

I am writing you today in support of HB 79 as well asking you to take action on this bill. As many of you know there is a very large recruitment and retention issue in the state of Alaska when it comes to public safety and this bill moves us in the right direction to fix those issues. We have all had the chance to see the numbers and the cost associated with not having a retirement system. By choosing to not act on this bill we are simply saying that we don't want to fix a known problem that is costing our state not only millions of dollars but also good people

I have grown up in Alaska and I have made this my home. I want to make sure that people like myself can stay in this state and work for the people we grew up around and in the communities we know. Currently with the tier 4 system that is just not possible. We are currently losing and will continue to lose good Alaskans to other states who have a DB retirement.

I would again like to urge the House Finance Committee to take action on this bill so that it can move forward in the process and give Alaska a better chance at keeping and recruiting more good people to our state.

Sincerely,

Shayne Wescott

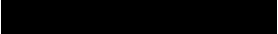


**From:** [mcmillancath@gmail.com](mailto:mcmillancath@gmail.com)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 8:20:20 PM

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Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Catherine McMillan and I am writing this email in support of House Bill 79. I am also writing this to urge members of the House Finance Committee to move HB79 forward now. This state has seen a mass exodus of its public safety employee since implementation of a defined contribution plan in 2006. I understand that that previous PERS tiers had problems, but the hybrid plan laid out in HB79 is anything but the plans we've seen in the past. HB79 is a financially responsible defined benefit plan. It will help retain the employees we spend millions training and attract the talent that this state deserves. Please move this bill forward now and help provide our public safety employees the retirement security they deserve. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Catherine McMillan  
17724 Chilkat Cr  
Eagle River, AK 99577  


**From:** [Holly Brooks](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 8:30:55 PM

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Dear House Finance Committee,

The purpose of this letter is meant to be a support for House Bill 79, the public safety retirement bill.

My husband, Rob, has been with the Anchorage Fire Department for thirteen years now. We have a young family (2.5 year old month old twins) and are active, contributing members and volunteers in the Anchorage community. Rob was hired right after the state of Alaska switched to the Tier 4 system. Everyone hired before him has a defined benefit plan and it is my understanding that a LARGE majority of Fire and Police Departments in the lower 48 still offers a defined benefit plan to their public safety employees.

Due to the lack of benefits here (and potentially catalyzed by having twins) Rob and many of his co-workers have been contemplating career changes and/or moving down south to work for police and fire departments in the lower 48. My family is heavily invested in this community and love Alaska. The last thing we want to do is leave! But we also need to look out for our future and our kids' futures. The past year at the dinner table consist of my husband talking about a career change. It's very stressful an unnerving at times.

It is my belief that Alaska NEEDS to retain good people. The cost of losing institutional knowledge and retraining people from the ground up is too high. I understand that Alaska cannot afford exorbitant pensions (as offered in the past) but I believe that we at least need to be competitive with public safety departments down south and offer a sustainable pension for our public safety employees. Alaska's greatest resource is it's people and quality public safety is a cornerstone of a healthy, thriving community.

Thank you in advance for taking action on House Bill 79.

Sincerely,  
Holly Brooks  
2-Time Olympian  
Licensed Professional Counselor / Small Business Owner  
Alaska Sports Hall of Fame  
Top 40 under 40, 2019

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Holly Brooks



Twitter: @brooksha1  
Facebook: Holly Brooks LLC

**From:** [Robert Whitney](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:00:39 PM

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Dear House Finance Committee,

I am writing today in regards to HB 79 and supporting Alaska's Tier 4 employees with a sustainable retirement. I am a 13 year professional firefighter with the city of Anchorage, and was hired under the Tier 4 system.

Peace officers, firefighters and corrections officers deserve a decent retirement. House Bill 79 is about supporting Alaska's future. As a state, we are losing Tier 4 employees too fast because they are looking elsewhere for a retirement for their families. For example, the Anchorage Police Department is losing employees faster than they can hire, and the current crime situation in Anchorage is indicative of this because standard officer patrol staffing is so incredibly minimal. As a firefighter, I am constantly worried about my retirement situation with two kids under the age of three years.

As a firefighter, I go to work not knowing if I will return home the following day. We have fires and many medical calls that are downright scary (i.e. homicides, shootings, crimes, etc.) Myself, and other coworkers, are considering leaving our jobs to work at other departments in other states because they offer a defined benefit retirement.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. Please taking action on House Bill 79. There is a cost to this bill, like anything, but the cost of doing nothing will be much greater. Is neglecting Alaska's future worth it?

Sincerely,  
Robert Whitney  
Anchorage, AK

**From:** [John Borland](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 2:34:50 PM

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To the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 79. I'm a firefighter working under the Tier IV retirement system, and the shortfalls of the system as it currently stands have me actively looking at options elsewhere. If Alaska doesn't want to lose more and more public safety employees to jobs out of state with better retirement, we need to change our current retirement system. Please take action on this bill now to help secure a future for public safety workers.

Thank you,  
John Borland

**From:** [Rick Sandoval](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 2:25:12 PM  
**Attachments:** [February 25.docx](#)

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Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [ab1hook](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 1:53:25 PM

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To whom it may concern,

Please support house bill 79! Those of us in Tier 4 are greatly appreciative of the support shown us so far. Please continue this and make this bill pass!

Thank you,

Jerald Goss

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [rjharley@gci.net](mailto:rjharley@gci.net)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 9:01:44 AM

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I want to express that my family and I are in full support of House Bill 79 and want to see action taken on this ASAP!

The lack of a defined benefit has been detrimental in retaining employees after we spend a bunch of time and money training them. It is extremely frustrating to see them move to another area simply because the other location is able to give them what we are all looking for.

Sincerely,

Robert Harley

**From:** [Kelley Russell](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 8:30:35 PM

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Dear House Finance Committee,

My name is Dr. Kelley Russell and I am writing you in ardent support of House Bill 79, which is focuses on addressing the public safety retirement crisis we have in Alaska. I am a recent graduate of the University of Alaska Anchorage's Doctoral Program in Clinical Community Psychology and am a clinical psychologist, serving the mental and behavioral health needs of Alaskans. I am also married to a firefighter, Jayson Russell, who is a firefighter/EMT and future paramedic (currently enrolled in a paramedic program) in the Anchorage Fire Department and is very involved in several aspects of the organization, including serving on the Fallen Firefighters Committee, and being one of the mentors on the local Fire Explorers Post for youth interested in the Fire Service.

I urge you pass this bill. I have seen so many fire service professionals leave the state, especially in the past few years, discussing how although they love Alaska, it is impossible for them to stay because every other state has a better retirement/benefits system than Alaska. Most of my husband and my fire service friends are paramedics, who have specialty training within emergency services to provide the best pre-hospital care. Unfortunately, I cannot think of one of our fire service friends who are not seriously considering moving to Washington fire departments, where they not only get better retirements, but would actually end up working less time (which is critical in maintaining longevity in emergency service). My own husband, who has dreamed of being an Anchorage Firefighter since he was 6 years old, has been discussing more how we need to consider moving within the near future if the state does not change to offer the same support that is offered to his fellow firefighters in other states.

I throw my support behind this bill for three reasons. First, as a community member, I believe the service and sacrifice of our emergency medical professionals deserves to be honored. We need to take care of the people who take care of us. Also, as a community member, I am concerned about having an adequate workforce to provide care in an emergency. In a geographically isolated place that has some of the highest rates of traumatic experiences (suicide, domestic violence, etc.), we need to have good emergency response providers, and numerous ones at that. Without providing competitive benefits, it will be difficult if not impossible to provide the needed workforce to staff the front lines of these traumas. Our community would also deteriorate beyond just the emergency services. When emergency services personnel continue to leave this state, their families leave with them. Firefighters are often married to teachers, nurses/other medical professionals, and people who work in other service jobs. All of these sections of our community will be significantly impacted by the continued flood of emergency services professionals out of the state.

Second, as a mental health professional, I have heard the stories of survivors of various traumatic events whose suffering has been made easier by having rapid and



quality care by emergency response teams. Everyone deserves someone who is enthusiastic about their job, well trained and focused to be there to provide care to them on one of the worst days of their lives. If we have providers who are dissatisfied and feel unsupported by the community that they offer their lives and physical and mental health for, those patients are not going to get as quality of care as they deserve. Those negative mental health effects can reverberate through generations.

Third, personally, as an Alaskan who loves this state, I do not want to leave but very likely will be forced to move with my husband if something is not changed in providing better retirement for public safety. I have spent almost my whole life here, and returned to get my graduate education in this state so I could receive specialized training in addressing the mental health needs of Alaska. I want to continue serving Alaskans as a psychologist and I want Jayson to be on the front lines as a firefighter and soon to be paramedic. I want our children to grow up here, experiencing the vibrant individuality of Alaska, enjoying and protecting the beauty of its lands.

As a community member, mental health professional, wife of a firefighter and enthusiastic Alaskan, I urge and encourage you to pass House Bill 79. Please take these next steps to protect our firefighters, our emergency medical response system and our amazing state. Thank you so much for your thoughtful consideration, and your dedication to bettering Alaska.

Thank you,  
Kelley Russell, Ph.D.

**From:** [Hall, Jeff S.](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 4:52:13 PM

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To House Finance Committee members

Hello, my name is Jeff Hall. I am a life long Alaskan and have worked as a Firefighter/Paramedic with the Anchorage Fire Department for the past 14 years. I am writing today in support to House Bill 79, and encouraging the committee members to take action now and pass this bill. Around half of public safety workers now fall into the Tier IV retirement system, which lacks a defined benefit structure. This retirement system does not provide an adequate retirement for frontline public safety workers including firefighters, police officers, and State Troopers. This failing has real financial consequences for the state and local municipalities in the form of recruitment and retention. Currently well trained public safety members are leaving Alaska for jobs in the lower 48 that offer better retirement options. This means that money which could be used for training and equipment is now being used to recruit and train new employees. Public safety departments now have less combined experience as they are forced to continually bring in and train new members. Without action from the legislature this problem, which affects nearly every public safety department within the state, will continue unabated.

HB 79 has the potential to stem the recruitment and retention crisis while also protecting the state from unfunded liability. It offers a conservative approach with modest benefits. These benefits will allow public safety departments throughout the state to attract and retain the best public safety employees possible. Public safety is a cause that affects every Alaskan. Having well-trained and experienced public safety employees benefits everyone. A defined retirement is a key factor for public safety employees who often have shorter careers due to the physical and emotional stressors of our jobs. I encourage you to support House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to this growing problem and sets Alaska up to be a competitive recruiter of top public safety candidates again.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Jeff Hall



**From:** [Melchert, Michael L.](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 3:05:30 PM

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House Bill 79

Dear Alaskan elected official,

I am writing to state my support of House Bill 79. I have lived in Alaska since 1969 and have been an employee of the Anchorage Fire Department for over 25 years. I would appreciate you passing this bill. I have invested my life here in our great state. I would like there to be an incentive for those that choose to follow my path and others in the public service workforce. Right now, with the Tier 4 retirement system, we are losing employees to the lower 48 at an alarming rate. These highly trained individuals are looking for a decent retirement for the dangerous work that they do. We risk our health and lives on a daily basis to keep our community safe. I have assisted in new hire testing for the fire department and regularly see these new employees leave our great state due to the poor retirement system that has been offered them.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mike Melchert

Fire Captain Anchorage Fire Department

**From:** [Cole Crockett](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2020 5:16:41 PM

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Cole Crockett and I am one of your Anchorage Fire Department firefighters. I have had the privilege to serve the community where I was born and raised for the past 6 years with AFD. I want to continue my career here in Alaska, but the fact is that there are better retirement options elsewhere. This weighs heavily on me, as I now have a child on the way and my long-term well being is even more important to my family than ever. I have applied and tested for fire departments Outside, and will continue to do so, unless we can make a fix.

House Bill 79 is that fix. Please support HB79. Please support myself, and others like me, who love this great state, but are actively pursuing opportunities in other places. Please help make Alaska a state that values its public servants and is a place we can live, work, play, and one day retire in with security.

Thank you for your service,

Cole Crockett

**From:** [Julieanna Potter \[Orczewska\]](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Bill 79  
**Date:** Monday, March 2, 2020 10:05:23 AM

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Good Morning,

My name is Julieanna Potter and I am a life long Alaskan. In 2011, my husband joined the Anchorage Fire Department to support our community as a firefighter. As the spouse of a current Tier IV member, I'm writing you today in support of House Bill (HB) 79.

Nearly half of our State's public safety employees fall under the current Tier IV retirement system. This system does not provide an adequate or competitive retirement for our State's firefighters, police officers and Troopers which has resulted in lowered recruitment, lowered retention of trained and experienced employees, and subsequently, challenges with adequate staffing throughout all of our public safety sectors.

The current retirement system and subsequent low retention is also financially burdensome. The cost of training a new public safety employee is approximately \$190,000, spread out over that individual's 25 year career. Current trends show that newer Tier IV employees are leaving the state after an average of 5 years of service in search of a more competitive retirement system. With each loss, Alaska loses its trained employees to other states and must start over with a new recruitment.

This cyclical epidemic that has begun to plague the public safety sector will only continue if something isn't done to address the need for a change to a defined benefit system. HB 79 is a practical solution to this growing problem and I encourage your support on this issue. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your hard work in Juneau.

Sincerely,

Julieanna Potter

**From:** [Mackinzie Ann Hutchings](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HOUSE BILL 79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 8:58:43 PM

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I would like to email and voice my support for HB 79. I believe that our men and women who serve our communities and are willingly putting themselves in life threatening situations to protect the public deserve to have a secure retirement waiting for them. Their jobs are essential for our communities, and we need to support them. Also by giving them a pension we are helping to secure hard working individuals and this will reduce the turnover rate, which will result in more skilled workers because they continue to receive training throughout their careers.

Thank you for taking you time to read this.

**From:** [Brian Palmer](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House bill 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 11:23:47 AM

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2/28/2020

Dear House Finance Committee:

Good day. I am writing to you today to discuss my concerns with the current PERS TIER IV retirement system. I have been a Firefighter and member of the Anchorage Fire Department for 12 years. I am in TIER IV and fear that the current retirement system is flawed and doesn't provide enough of a benefit to its employees. The truth of the matter is, with a quick glance at my TIER IV account it is hard to imagine it would even be half of what a retirement account should be by the time I hit retirement age.

Another consideration, public safety workers (Police Officers, State Troopers, and Firefighters) who work on the line experience severe physical and mental burden over the course of a 25 year career. I fear that the current TIER IV members will be steered toward working LONGER careers because of not being in a financial position to retire, which could ultimately have disastrous physical and mental health consequences for our front line public safety personal whom have worked so hard to protect the citizens of our great state.

I hope you would consider supporting House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to my concerns with the current TIER IV retirement system. Thank you for all your hard work in Juneau.

Sincerely,

Brian Palmer  
Constituent District 11



**From:** [karlydsena@gmail.com](mailto:karlydsena@gmail.com)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** I support HB 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 11:51:11 AM

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Dear House Finance Committee,

I am writing to voice my support of House Bill 79 and ask the House Finance Committee to take immediate action.

This bill is extremely important for our first responders, and will make Alaska a competitive place for first responder careers, rather than losing great candidates to the lower 48.

Thank you,

Karly Wade



**From:** [Christi Henning](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** I Support HB79  
**Date:** Sunday, February 23, 2020 7:53:55 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you today to share my support for HB79 and am asking that the house finance committee take action in support of this.

There are multiple reasons why this HB79 should be put in place. This bill is not only good for Alaska, but also makes Alaska competitive and supports the public safety employees.

Please take action and support this bill, not only for our first responders, but also for our community and state.

Thank you,  
Christina Berger

**From:** [KELLY KNEAPER](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** I support HB79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 11:36:36 AM

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to pledge my support for HB79! Firefighters deserve to have retirement benefits. They put their lives on the line everyday and to have have a job of this magnitude and not have retirement benefits is criminal. They need them, they deserve them. Retirement benefits!

Sincerely,

Kelly Kneaper

**From:** [Kali Ferrin](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 8:43:34 PM

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I am writing in support of house bill 79. I feel that this bill is a good compromise for employees as well as the city. This bill will help with retention, which will save money. I am asking that the House Finance Committee take action now on this bill. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Kali Ferrin

**From:** [Philip Rupp](#)  
**To:** [Houes.Finance@akleg.gov](mailto:Houes.Finance@akleg.gov)  
**Subject:** Pass HB79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 11:36:38 AM

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To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Phil Rupp and I am a lifelong resident of Eagle River. I am writing this letter to highly encourage you to PASS HB79! We need action on this bill now, not later! First Responders are a crucial component of a community and we are **struggling** to retain and recruit quality candidates due to the lack of a quality pension. Police and Firefighters are willing to serve and make sacrifices(physically and mentally) for their community for the duration of a career and should at least be rewarded with a decent pension for their dedication to keeping this community safe. Thank you for your time and commitment to making the state of Alaska a better place!!

Sincerely,  
Phil Rupp

**From:** [Amber Forth](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Cc:** [Landon Forth](#)  
**Subject:** PLEASE READ HB79 letter of support  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 11:37:32 AM

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To my Honorable Representatives,

I am writing in support of House Bill 79.

My name is Amber Forth. I am a lifelong Alaskan and have been a resident since the Exxon Oil Spill of 1989. I am 43 years old, a mother of three children, and married to another true Alaskan, who was born and raised here in Anchorage.

Together, we have chosen to call this our home. We have had many opportunities to move out of state, and many of them are very enticing.

Our hope is to raise our children to love Alaska as we do, and to consider raising a family here as we have. We are both involved in our children's school, as the PTA Presidents and have created and run our schools 6th grade camp, which we have built around having these students, see and appreciate the beauty Alaska has to offer, from the mountains we climb to the glaciers we hike. So they too, will fall in love with Alaska and want to stay.

I am currently a flight attendant with Alaska Airlines for over 20 years. While I can be based in many other (warmer) locations, we constantly make the choice to remain here in Alaska. Before, Alaska Airlines, I worked for the Municipality of Anchorage, long enough to be vested in our retirement system under the Tier II retirement system. What upsets me the most, is that here our police and firefighters are putting not only their lives on the line daily for the benefit of OUR COMMUNITY, but research shows, due to the higher stress, lack of sleep due to their shift schedules (police & fire), and the hazards of chemical, mechanical, and physical demands, their lives will be cut shorter. As a wife and mother of 3 children who believe their daddy is their hero, it breaks my heart to know, my husband is so giving to this job, that his children and myself and all families of firefighters and police officers, will lose out on years with their hero, while they are being someone else's hero. I know these men & women hate to be called a hero, but how else can I put it? When a fire truck rolls up to your burning house or car, or uses the jaws of life to pull you out of the wreckage (this happened to me), or a police car shows up when in the middle of the night because a man with a gun is hiding in your back shed, or a homeless person threatens you, or a man follows your child home and invites them to come with them (yes, this has all happened to me), these men & women are OUR HEROES!

My husband has served in the military, ran his own construction company, and currently works as a Captain with the Anchorage Fire Department. He has skills, that any company would be lucky to have him as an employee. I am writing you in concern of our current Tier IV retirement system. Along with 31 others, he was in the first AFD hire group under the Tier IV system.

To be clear, he loves his job and the citizens he serves. He have been fortunate to have worked with some of the finest human beings on earth, and the men & women of AFD has been no exception.

By now, over half of his colleagues are Tier IV employees.

My brother is also a firefighter with AFD and under the Tier III system.

Please tell me why my life is valued more than my husband's life or those he works with. Why is my brother's life valued more than over half of the rest his co-workers? If you ask most citizens of Alaska, they would strongly support the retirement of these public service employees who risk their lives for the benefit ours. The amount of stress and awful situations they witness, why would they deserve less than me in the later years of their life?

Over the past several years, many of his coworkers have discussed testing for other professional departments in the Lower 48. Departments that offer defined benefits (DB), a retirement system. Several of them have tested, several have already left, several more are testing currently. There are still professional fire departments offering great wages, benefits, work conditions AND retirement; This concept is NOT a magic unicorn.

Tier IV retirement is several things, what it is NOT is a long term solution to the future of our state. My city is spending millions on recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development. In many cases creating a "fish-in-a-barrel" environment, a professional training camp for the competitive departments mentioned above to snipe from. All at the expense of our citizens and their hard earned tax dollars. I am speaking of AFD, APD, and several other professional union work groups within our state. We pay for all the eating and training only to lose them to another department out of state, where the climate is less harsh, your paycheck goes a lot further, and the overall cost of living is substantially less.

Let's face the facts. Alaska is an expensive place to live, work and play. The Alaskan spirit is alive and well, but finances do matter. Of my hire group of 31, one left the job after just 5 years to become a school counselor (out of state with DB). Three others have left as well (DB) and several more are on the fence. And that's just my hire group. I believe as many as 20 employees tested for other fire departments (DB) just last year. That number will continue to increase. Add to the FACT that my department is already doing more with less, with no financial relief on the horizon, a significant number of our work group is already looking for greener pastures elsewhere (DB).

**Please consider House Bill 79 as a step in the right direction.**

**I am urging the House Finance Committee to take action on this bill and continue to move it through the legislative process.**

Please consider:

- Tier IV has been proven time and time again to be an inadequate retirement system for public

safety employees.

- The state is wasting money by training public safety employees and then seeing them leave our state. These are hardworking, model citizens, often with families. A gift to the community that values their talents and spirit.

- We are no longer competitive in recruiting. It is proven that an employee hired from out of state is much more likely to leave Alaska within the first 5 years of employment. Taking their training and experience with them.

- We recognize there will be a cost to this bill, but the cost of doing nothing will be much greater.

- Tier IV requires a solution and HB79 is just that. Please let our leadership work with the State to help create a solution that is financially responsible and equitable to all. Please do this for the future of our State and our hard working citizens that live here.

As of this writing, I have no immediate plans to leave the job or community I love. I can tell you however that I have had this discussion with my wife several times already. Without a defined benefit, the retirement carrot dangling out in the distance (in terms of longevity), greener pastures are literally only a plane ride away. Add to the fact that quitting a Tier IV job is the only way to get the use of your financial nest egg for non-traditional investing, it becomes too simple to make the leap of faith.

Please consider the long term health of our city governments, our workers, and our State.

You are our elected leaders and we implore you to help us by leading from the front, for our future.

Please take action now.

Thank you for your concern in this matter.

Amber Forth

Wife of an Anchorage Fire Department Captain

3320 Wells Circle

Anchorage, AK 99508

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [Amber Forth](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Cc:** [Landon Forth](#)  
**Subject:** PLEASE READ HB79 LETTER OF SUPPORT  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 12:50:45 PM

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To my Honorable Representatives,

I know you are probably getting many letters about House Bill 79, BUT I AM BEGGING YOU TO READ MINE ALL THE WAY THROUGH. I believe at the very least I deserve at least that. I know your time is precious, just as is mine. I have taken the time to write and give more insight on why I am asking your to support HB 79. You see, what is on the line here is so very important, we are talking my family and so many of our public servant friends' futures as well as the future of our communities.

I am writing in support of House Bill 79.

My name is Amber Forth. I am a lifelong Alaskan and have been a resident since the Exxon Oil Spill of 1989. I am 43 years old, a mother of three children, and married to another true Alaskan, who was born and raised here in Anchorage.

Together, we have chosen to call this our home. We have had many opportunities to move out of state, and many of them are very enticing.

Our hope is to raise our children to love Alaska as we do, and to consider raising a family here as we have. We are both involved in our children's school, as the PTA Presidents and have created and run our schools 6th grade camp, which we have built around having these students, see and appreciate the beauty Alaska has to offer, from the mountains we climb to the glaciers we hike. So they too, will fall in love with Alaska and want to stay.

I am currently a flight attendant with Alaska Airlines and have been for over 20 years. While I can be based in many other (warmer) locations, we constantly make the choice to remain here in Alaska. Before, Alaska Airlines, I worked for the Municipality of Anchorage, long enough to be vested in our retirement system under the Tier II retirement system. What upsets me the most, is that here our police and firefighters are putting not only their lives on the line daily for the benefit of OUR COMMUNITY, but research shows, due to the higher level of stress, lack of sleep due to their shift schedules (police & fire), and the hazards of chemicals exposures, mechanical dangers, and physical demands, their lives will be cut shorter.

As a wife and mother of 3 children who believe their daddy is their hero, it breaks my heart to know, my husband is so giving to this job, that his children and myself and all families of firefighters and police officers, will lose out on years with their hero, while they are being someone else's hero. I know these men & women hate to be called a hero, but how else can I put it? When a fire truck rolls up to your burning house or car, or uses the jaws of life to pull you out of the wreckage (this happened to me), or a police car shows up when in the middle of the night because a man with a gun is hiding in your back shed, or a homeless person threatens you, or a man follows your child



home and invites them to come with them (yes, this has all happened to me), these men & women are OUR HEROES!

My husband has served in the military, ran his own construction company, and currently works as a Captain with the Anchorage Fire Department. He has skills, that any company would be lucky to have him as an employee. Not to mention, he is an absolute asset to our community, which he loves as a Fire Captain, as are so many of the men & women he works with. They are kind, compassionate, hard-working, with vested interest in THEIR COMMUNITY.

I am writing you in concern of our current Tier IV retirement system. Along with 31 others, he was in the first AFD hire group under the Tier IV system.

To be clear, he loves his job and the citizens he serves. He have been fortunate to have worked with some of the finest human beings on earth, and the men & women of AFD has been no exception.

By now, over half of his colleagues are Tier IV employees.

My brother is also a firefighter with AFD and under the Tier III system.

Please tell me why my life is valued more than my husband's life or those he works with, given I am Tier II and he is Tier IV.

Why is my brother's life valued more than over half of the rest his co-workers?

If you ask most citizens of Alaska, they would strongly support the retirement of these public service employees who risk their lives for the benefit ours. The amount of stress and awful situations they witness, why would they deserve less than me and other in the later years of their life?

Over the past several years, many of his coworkers have discussed testing for other professional departments in the Lower 48. Departments that offer defined benefits (DB), a retirement system. Several of them have tested, several have already left, several more are testing currently. There are still professional fire departments offering great wages, benefits, work conditions AND a Defined Benefit retirement system; This concept is NOT a magic unicorn.

Tier IV retirement is several things, what it is NOT is a long term solution to the future of our state. My city is spending millions on recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development. In many cases creating a "fish-in-a-barrel" environment, a professional training camp for the competitive departments mentioned above to snipe from. All at the expense of our citizens and their hard earned tax dollars. I am speaking of AFD, APD, and several other professional union work groups within our state. We, the citizens, pay for all the recruiting and training for these public service employees, only to lose them to another department out of state, where the climate is less harsh, your paycheck goes a lot further, and the overall cost of living is substantially less AND A STATE THAT VALUES THEIR YEARS OF SERVICE WITH A DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT PLAN.

Let's face the facts. Alaska is an expensive place to live, work and play. The Alaskan spirit is alive and well, but finances do matter. Of his hire group of 31, one left the job after just 5 years to become a school counselor (out of state with Defined Benefits). Three others have left as well (with Defined Benefits) and several more are on the fence. And that's just ONE hire group. I believe as many as 20 employees tested for other fire departments (with Defined Benefits) just last year. That number will continue to increase. Add to the FACT that his department is already doing more with less, with no financial relief on the horizon, a significant number of his work group is already looking for greener pastures elsewhere (with Defined Benefits). With each new hire group, more members right after getting hired, are searching elsewhere for work with Defined Benefits.

**Please consider House Bill 79 as a step in the right direction.**

**I am urging the House Finance Committee to take action on this bill and continue to move it through the legislative process.**

Please consider:

- Tier IV has been proven time and time again to be an inadequate retirement system for public safety employees.
- The state is wasting money by training public safety employees and then seeing them leave our state. These are hardworking, model citizens, often with families. A gift to the community that values their talents and spirit.
- We are no longer competitive in recruiting. It is proven that an employee hired from out of state is much more likely to leave Alaska within the first 5 years of employment. Taking their training and experience with them.
- We recognize there will be a cost to this bill, but the cost of doing nothing will be much greater.
- Tier IV requires a solution and HB79 is just that. Please let our leadership work with the State to help create a solution that is financially responsible and equitable to all. Please do this for the future of our State and our hard working citizens that live here.

As of this writing, he has no immediate plans to leave the job or community which we love. I can tell you however, together we have had many discussions already about the pros to moving of state for a department with Defined Benefits. Without a defined benefit, the retirement carrot dangling out in the distance (in terms of longevity), greener pastures are literally only a plane ride away. Add to the fact that quitting a Tier IV job is the only way to get the use of your financial nest egg for non-traditional investing, it becomes too simple to make the leap of faith.

Please consider the long term health of our city governments, our workers, and our State.

You are our elected leaders and we implore you to help us, by leading from the front, for not only our future, but for our young citizens, our children's future tax-paying citizens as well.

Please take action now.

Thank you for your concern in this matter.

Amber Forth

Wife of an Anchorage Fire Department Captain

In the Tier IV Retirement Program

3320 Wells Circle

Anchorage, AK 99508

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [Patrick Gregg](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** PLEASE SUPPORT HB 79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 3:25:12 PM

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Dear Alaskan Elected Officials,

First and foremost, thank you for all your hard work and support in getting House Bill 79 this far!!!

My name is Patrick Gregg. I live in Anchorage with my wife Devin and we have raised 3 children here. I've been a firefighter with the Anchorage Fire Department for 21 years; the last 13 of which have been as a Fire Captain.

I'm writing to you today to express my grave concern about the inadequacies of the current Tier IV retirement system that all Public Safety employees, hired since 2007, are members of. The Tier IV plan is incredibly flawed. As a result, recruitment and retainment of Public Safety Employees is down. House Bill 79 goes a long way towards fixing that.

I'm "one of the lucky ones" that hired on in 1999 so I am a member of Tier III which provides at least some level of financial security for my wife and I when I retire one day. My 2 oldest sons are not so lucky. One is a firefighter here with AFD. The other is a firefighter with the FFD in Fairbanks. Both are members of Tier IV which provides absolutely no financial security for their retirement futures. They are both hard working, disciplined young men who are aggressively contributing, on their own, to other retirement account options but even with that, they WILL NOT have enough to live on and provide for their families in retirement. As a result, there is a high likelihood that they will both eventually seek positions with other departments outside the State of Alaska. There are many fire departments in the Northwest that regularly offer "laterals" from one department to another. And many of them are still offering a defined benefit retirement plan. Since 2007 we have started losing people to these lateral transfers at an alarming rate and it will only increase unless Tier IV is replaced with something that can offer some financial security. HB 79 is a good start towards correcting that in a practical way which is good for both the State of Alaska as well as the hard working people who serve it.

The bottom line is this. When I hired on with the AFD it was not uncommon to be testing against 2000-3000 people. These days we

are lucky if we receive 350 applications and the common thing that you will hear from people is that the Tier IV retirement system is to blame.

Please continue to support House Bill 79 and encourage your colleagues on the House Finance Committee to do the same. The cost to the State of Alaska in supporting this bill will be far less than if we do nothing at all.


Sincerely,

Patrick R Gregg



**From:** [Renee Oistad](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Please support HB 79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 8:22:00 AM

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Renee D. Oistad  
10330 Arborvitae Drive  
Anchorage, Alaska 99507  


Friday, February 28, 2020

State House Finance Committee  
Alaska State Capitol  
120 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

RE: House Bill 79

I respectfully ask that you support HB 79 – Police and Fire Pension. I have been a proud non-sworn member of the Anchorage Police Department for over 23 years now. One of the main reasons I sought employment at APD back in 1996 was because I was looking for a career that would provide excellent benefits along with a solid retirement pension. Almost everyone employed at APD at that time had the same goal I had which was to stay until retirement. I feel very fortunate and lucky to have been hired under PERS Plan III.

There are several benefits to working at a place with long-term employees. It creates a sense of family and ownership as we're all in it for the long haul. Many-year employees also have a vast amount of knowledge that benefits everyone. Especially in our line of work, we learn the most effective way of accomplishing our goals from others before us who have tried other ways and figured out which was the best. It saves us from learning lessons "the hard way" when it's already been done. It makes us more effective in serving this great community we live in.

Over the last several years, after the defined pension plan went away, I saw many changes and not good ones. By no means am I bad-mouthing my coworkers who were hired under PERS Plan IV, but their attitude is different. Most of them do not plan on staying at APD for many years. They work five years, get excellent training, and then leave with their 401K and go to another department that does offer a defined benefit retirement plan. The knowledge base we used to have walking these halls is not nearly as vast as it used to be. It's also a money issue. It costs a lot of money, and takes a lot of time, to train new employees regardless if they are sworn or non-sworn. It's unfortunate, and quite frankly wasteful, that we invest so much in employees who are only here for the short term.

Finally, moral has definitely been affected. Our workplace doesn't have the same family feel that it used to. Too many people are coming and going on a regular basis which disrupts the establishment of committed friendships.

Nationwide police departments are having a hard time recruiting employees, especially

employees who meet the stringent hiring standards that APD adheres to. We must offer a solid retirement plan in order to attract and retain top notch people. We need your help to accomplish this goal. Please do your part by supporting and passing HB 79.

Respectfully,

Renee D. Oistad

**From:** [MATTHEW CHOATE](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Retirement  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 10:01:11 AM

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As an Officer with the Anchorage Police Department I believe that both Police and Fire pensions should be brought back.

It incentivises long term commitment from members of departments. Encouraging experienced members to invest in the organization that has invested in them. And slow the attrition caused by employees seeking employment with departments out of state who do offer pensions.

Thank you for your time.

Ofc. Matthew Choate  
Anchorage Police Department  
Mid-Shift Patrol



**From:** [Matthew Hall](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Support for HB79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 8:17:51 AM

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Good morning,

I have been a State of Alaska Police and Fire Officer since 2013; I worked with Fairbanks Airport Police and Fire Department (2013-2017) and I currently work with the Anchorage Airport Police and Fire Department (2017-Present). I am writing in support for HB79 as I believe current Police and Fire officers need a better retirement system. Since getting hired with the State of Alaska I have seen many fellow officers complete their training and obtain certifications and take that training and experience down to the lower 48 to obtain employment with different departments based on having a better retirement plan. My wife and I discuss my retirement; wishing that it was a little better and hoping for a change in retirement as it heavily affects our families future.

Thank you for taking the time in reading this email and considering HB79.

Matthew Hall

**From:** [Tony Marchini](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Support for HB79  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:03:21 AM

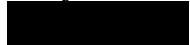
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To whom it may concern:

I am writing this to let you know that I fully support HB79 with the hope that it will fix of the Tier IV system. Just to let you know, I am currently working for the Anchorage Fire Department and I am in my 9th year of doing so. This is the job that I was meant to do and I love coming to work each and every day. However the toll that it has taken on my body and the repercussions that I am now feeling and seeing with my medical check ups are not worth it. I am now actively pursuing a job to leave the Anchorage fire department to another position that will give me more stability and a legitimate retirement that I wont have to worry about my family and I's future. Please take action on this bill now and move it along and don't let it hang up in committees and die. If there was a realistic change in the system I may consider staying until I am of retirement age. Until then the lower 48 may get a well trained motivated firefighter for no cost of training (as they are offering laterals) and Alaska and Anchorage will be stuck with footing the bill on training my replacement who very well may leave shortly after he/she is trained as well.

Respectfully,

Tony Marchini



**From:** [Tompkins, Katherine A.](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Support for HB79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 8:14:16 PM

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Good evening,

I would like to express my support for the public safety retirement bill, HB79, and implore you to take up this legislation this year. As both the governor and legislators have noted in various committees, Alaska is having a public safety problem. While the problem is complex and the potential solutions need to be multifaceted, I believe that no solutions will be complete without addressing the retirement disparity for public safety officers that result in the outmigration of these valuable committee resources to other states. Alaska is struggling to not only recruit public servants, but to retain those that we have invested resources in training.

I support that this legislation seeks to not only aid in recruitment and retention but to maintain fiscal responsibility. The move of using the high 3 to the high 5 years is a great addition to help address some of the issues that resulted in the state moving away from Tier 3.

Since this is the second year of session, I strongly request that the committee makes movement on this bill during this year so the great work that has occurred on this bill does not have to be restarted when a new two year session starts and that Alaska can begin to turn the tide on this issue.

Thank you,

Katherine McDonald

**From:** [Keenan Mulvaney](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Support HB 79  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020 8:30:15 AM

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Hello,

I have been a law enforcement officer in Alaska for over 10 years. I stay because I like what I do, not because I can earn a pension, which as you know I cannot. Tier 4 has created a system in Alaska where Tier 4 employees come here, become vested, and take their money to an out agency that will allow them to retire.

I would like to remain in Alaska and continue to serve. Having an uncertain future does not help that. Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

**From:** [mia harren](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Support HB79  
**Date:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 10:13:09 AM

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To whom it may concern,

I support HB79, because as a police officer, my family deserves a secure future. When the days are the hardest and I don't know if I can make it through the trauma, I remember how much I'm needed. I consider how the job benefits, despite all the bad days, don't compare to anywhere else. HB79 will improve retention even more, so we don't lose valuable officers to out of state departments after having invested so much in them.

Thanks,  
Ofc Mia Badillo

**From:** [Brea Potter](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Support HB79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 2:24:35 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I write this email to show my support for HB79 and to voice that providing retirement for first responders; cops, firefighters and troopers is a key to keeping well trained individuals local! By not providing retirement individuals that we pay to train take it upon themselves to seek better financial support for their futures by leaving the state.

Thank you for your time Brea Potter

**From:** [Nick Glorioso](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Support House Bill 79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 2:44:21 PM

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I am writing in strong support for House Bill 79. As many of you probably know and as was reported in the AK DPS recruitment and retention plan, we are losing public safety professionals at a record pace. The framework within HB 79 is good for Alaska as it keeps police and firefighters here at home to be positive influences in our communities. It is fiscally responsible as public safety agencies don't lose highly trained (and expensive) employees to all of the other states in the northwest with a DB retirement plans. It is good for the employees as they are able to plan for retirement at age 55 before becoming older employees that are more susceptible to injury in the form of expensive work comp claims. I know most of our elected officials tout their support for public safety and this is an opportunity to prove it. I urge you to support HB 79 and help progress this Bill into state law. Thank you for your support.

Nick Glorioso



**From:** [Matt Herman](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Support of HB 79  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 1:15:15 PM

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Hello, my name is Matt Herman, I am a 20 year member of the Anchorage Fire Department, and I am writing to you today to express my support for HB 79. I anticipate that you will get a lot of emails regarding this bill, so I will keep mine short, but provide you my perspective as concisely as I can.

In my time with the Anchorage Fire Department I have seen the numbers of applicants that come through the door to take the recruitment exam drop by a significant number. We have dropped from a point of receiving over 1400 applications per hire test to a number less than one third of that. The single greatest reason for this reduction is the Tier 4 retirement that is offered to new Firefighters.

In addition to facing recruitment troubles as a result of the Tier 4 retirement system, we have also lost stellar employees here at AFD, to other cities in the lower 48. They work here for a couple years, gain experience, then move elsewhere and into better retirement system. As a Captain with AFD, it is my job to train and educate our incoming Probationary employees and teach them all the intricacies of being a Firefighter. It is frustrating and worrisome that we spend years of teaching and investment in these employees only to have them realize that they could have the same job, in a better retirement system, if they just apply and accept an easy lateral transfer to Boise, Bellingham, or any other similar city. I can tell you, without hesitation, that if I was a new firefighter today, the decision to pursue this job elsewhere, in a defined benefit system, with healthcare in retirement, would be an easy one.

In closing, let me say, the job of a Firefighter is hard. It is comprised of dangerous, strenuous work, first hand and secondary trauma, sleep deprivation, and exposure to all kinds of carcinogens and hazardous materials. We do everything in our power to minimize the exposures, dangers and risks, but the very idea that this is a job where you can easily work 40 years and retire with a 401k that's grown in that 40 years is a misnomer. You simply won't make it. I have worked 20 years at the some of busiest stations in Anchorage, and while it's been very rewarding, it has also been tiring and difficult, I certainly wouldn't make it another 20 years.

I would ask that your committee take my words and experience to heart and work to remedy the problems that the current Tier 4 poses for not only our Firefighters, but the State as a whole, and move forward on HB79.

Thank you for taking the time to listen.

Sincerely,

Matt Herman  
Captain, Anchorage Fire Department  




**From:** [Johnstone, James R.](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Cc:** [Miranda, Paul A.](#)  
**Subject:** Support of HB79  
**Date:** Friday, February 28, 2020 6:23:52 PM

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Dear Finance Committee,

I am writing to voice my support of House Bill 79. I am an Anchorage Fire Fighter with tier IV. Improvements to our retirement plan are needed to encourage long term employment of Anchorage's first responders. As a life long Alaskan it is my dearest wish to remain here, to raise a family here, and to give back to the community I grew up in. HB 79 will encourage others like me to stay in the state instead of being forced out to departments with more sustainable retirement plans. I implore each and everyone of you to look at our police departments, fire departments, and other government agencies that are struggling to hire and retain employees, and ask yourself if the state can sustain any kind of growth without that personnel.

If that future growth seems uncertain to you, imagine the uncertainly my family faces with my current retirement plan. This bill will help empower growth, and generations of new Alaskans.

Sincerely,

James Johnstone

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**From:** [Nicholas Murdock](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Tier 4 retirement  
**Date:** Saturday, February 29, 2020 4:20:18 PM

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I am writing to support HB79 as a constituent to Rep.Knopp. Alaska is losing a lot of local FF paramedics to other states because of better retirement plans. With the current system once guys and gals are vested they are leaving for greener pastures in the lower 48 states. With that being said Alaska departments are using up money and time to train these FF/ paramedics just to see them leave. Departments state wide are having trouble finding and hiring qualified paramedics due to the lack of a decent retirement plan. There is nothing keeping people here because after five years they can leave and work elsewhere without losing anything.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Dustin Voss](#)  
**To:** [Rep. Gary Knopp](#); [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Writing in support of House Bill 79  
**Date:** Sunday, March 1, 2020 8:43:23 PM

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March 1, 2020

The Honorable Gary Knopp  
Alaska House of Representatives

RE: Writing in support of House Bill 79

Dear Representative Knopp,

My name is Dustin Voss and I am a firefighter in your 30<sup>th</sup> district. I am enrolled in PERS Tier IV and I am reaching out this evening in support of House Bill 79.

I've been serving the City of Kenai Fire Department for the past six years and before that served the North Slope Borough Fire Department for five years. With over 10 years working for the State of Alaska, I have invested a lot in this state that I grew up in. I currently live with my wife – a life-long Kenai Peninsula local – and our new son.

It is my hope that my son will continued to be raised on the peninsula, enjoying all that it has to offer. Unfortunately, the current structure of the PERS Tier IV, retirement from KFD is unlikely, forcing my family to look elsewhere. I am currently monitoring other firefighter openings in Montana and Texas, where they offer a pension.

I do not believe that the current Tier IV system is sustainable giving that Fire Fighters and Police Officers will be forced to work much longer than their Tier III counterparts. At its present state, Tier IV will eventually increase injuries or deaths, while on the job.

It is vital, not only to the City of Kenai, but to Alaska, that you endorse this bill to ensure that public safety employees have fair compensation for their time served.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Dustin

Dustin Voss  
48030 Archie Dr.  
Kenai, AK 99611

**From:** [Sue Whitney](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** YES on HB 79 now.  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:38:54 PM

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House Finance Committee,

Urgent! Please do all you can to take action on House Bill 79 now!

I am a senior citizen who has lived, worked, and been a community volunteer in Anchorage for over 50 years. My husband and I came to Alaska on a whim but then stayed to put down roots and raise family here because Alaska was such a safe and vibrant place to be.

One of our grown children, a son, is now a Tier IV firefighter with the Municipality of Anchorage. I am appalled at current inadequacies in the Tier IV retirement system for all our public safety employees: police, troopers, firefighters, peace officers. We've lost our recruitment edge, we endanger morale, we worry our safety workforce with unsustainable retirement options, and unfortunately, we may soon lose highly trained, skilled, and good people to jobs outside Alaska. Sad commentary.

Let's spend what is needed now to save worse costs long term. We urge the House Finance Committee to do everything possible to take action on HB79.

Sincerely,

Sue Whitney  
Long time Anchorage resident