

From: Pat Kiewik <patkiewik@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 9, 2021 4:34 PM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 55

March 9th, 2021

Representative Andy Josephson:

Greetings,

My name is Pat Kiewik, I was born and raised in Anchorage and I am employed as a firefighter/EMT with the Anchorage Fire Department. I have proudly held this position for 10 years. The purpose of this email is to express my family's support of HB 55.

The necessity to provide Tier 4 Alaska public safety employees with a plan more comparable to previous eras has become abundantly obvious. The pitfalls of defined contribution has become a national conversation. On a local level, it's become a reality that is demonstrable in poor retention, poor morale, and costly rehiring within the state's branches of public safety.

I hope in this letter I can provide the committee with some ground-floor insight. Realizing my dream of becoming an Anchorage firefighter was a 5 year arduous process of volunteering, education, training, repeated testing, and sometimes painful rejection. When I was finally hired in 2011, I was idealistic and ecstatic to have attained this exciting career I had worked so hard for. I had no thoughts or concerns for retirement planning, the focus to this point had been singularly to get my foot in the door.

I still love my job, but now, as the years have flown by and I have been confronted by the realities of planning for my family's future, I must begrudgingly admit that my outlook has become much more cynical. I have tried to be as financially responsible as possible throughout this first leg of my career. I've lived very modestly, I've worked with financial planners, and I regularly reassess personal investments, yet the math is still not penciling out for any hopes of retiring at anything short of a 30 year career. For many careers, this may not seem unreasonable, however the problem with public safety jobs is the physical and mental toll sustained by the employee. Despite being a very health conscious individual in my mid 30's, I have already developed several chronic health conditions which are directly resultant from the job. The prospect of enduring another two decades feels unrealistic. Like many others, I am realizing that this career, no matter how rewarding, may not be worth the personal sacrifices it entails when there is no clear avenue to a healthful and prosperous retirement.

My story is not uncommon. The mood of the Tier 4 employees in my cohort is weary and unsettled, and the dialogue of want for something better is ongoing. Many in our leadership, those who are older, wiser, and truly understand the disadvantage of Tier 4, routinely encourage us to leave if we can find something better. The theorized repercussions of Tier 4 are now reality. I have watched numerous coworkers move on to either different careers or other fire departments in states that still offer a pension. People are leaving in numbers unheard of in previous generations, and the long-held disposition that this is a "career" job is shifting.

Simply put, Tier 4 is bad for public safety. In the midst of a challenging time for Alaska, it is imperative that we work to preserve the strength of our basic civic institutions. Public safety is a competitive career field that attracts intelligent and highly motivated individuals. These are the types of people who will fight for what's best for their futures and their families, and at present state, that will continue to mean that they will take their talents elsewhere. HB 55 offers a reasonable compromise that could single-handedly stabilize a badly broken system.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and all the work you do for the benefit of the citizens of Alaska.

Pat Kiewik
Anchorage Firefighter