

From: [KBEA President](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Sen. Gary Stevens](#); Representative.Louis.Stutes@akleg.gov
Subject: Email Testimony
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 11:28:01 AM

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of HB220. Passing HB 220 and fixing our broken retirement system is critical for Alaska students. It is no secret that there is a national shortage of teachers. Talented educators are in short supply. TRS Tier 3 is widely considered the worst retirement system for teachers in the United States. Every year, in the Kodiak Island Borough School District, I see great teachers leave because they would never be able to retire with dignity under TRS Tier 3.

Having so much change is not healthy for Kodiak kids. The relationship between a teacher and a student is the most critical factor in that student's learning. We need to do everything we can to keep our teachers in Alaska. Would you please pass HB220?

Sincerely,

Sabrina Sutton
Kodiak Borough Education Association President

From: Daniel Tuttle [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, January 7, 2022 2:47:00 PM
To: Rep. Zack Fields <Rep.Zack.Fields@akleg.gov>
Subject: Save Our Alaska Retirement Inquiry

Good afternoon,

My name is Daniel Tuttle and I am contacting you to see what your position is on HB 220, the likelihood of you seeing it actually moving anywhere, and to give you a personal story of why it is important to me that it passes.

I was born and raised right here in Anchorage, Alaska. After leaving for 4 years due to college in Texas, then for a teaching job in South Korea, I ended up coming back home to work in the community that I grew up in. I am currently a 7th year middle school Social Studies teacher in the Anchorage School District. As you are probably aware, we as teachers neither pay into Social Security, nor as a TRS III member do I pay into any kind of pension. With rising inflation, housing, and medical costs of Alaska in general, I am unsure of how anyone, unless taking risky stock market bets themselves, could ever survive on the current retirement plan that we have now. It is a glorified 401k, a finite amount of money that will quickly dwindle upon retirement, nothing more. In addition, even with working two jobs in the summertime, I would be faced with the Windfall Elimination Provision, which takes future Social Security payments away from me because I am in the current retirement system.

After contemplating on this for years, speaking with financial advisors and friends, I am at a crossroads. Staying in Alaska as a State worker is quite frankly, financial folly and makes hardly any sense unless you have a business, a large stock portfolio, rental properties or another stable source of retirement income that you've generated on your own. If this act passes, I would very likely be able to justify staying in the state of Alaska, a place that is not only home to me, but my close friends and aging parents. However, if the act does not pass and the legislature continues to do nothing to stem the hemorrhaging of talent that is leaving the state, I will very likely be joining the tide that is leaving. Other states offer better retirement packages, pay into Social Security and even at times have better pay. This is no great mystery as one of the previous Alaskan Teacher of the Year literally cited this reason as to why he moved to Washington. He saw that Juneau seemed to lack political will to actually do something to change the situation and he lacked the faith that anything would meaningfully change in a reasonable time frame. I urge you to consider the overall health of the state. Anchorage had a declining population for the first time in years and this is part of the problem. Young people like me hardly have a reason to stay anymore aside from familial/cultural connections and love of the land. Opportunities and connectivity with the Lower 48 can be far more appealing. This is a reality that will continue and for reasons beyond me, the state at large seems to not see the urgency of what is happening in front of their eyes. Because of all this, I encourage you to be an advocate for this Bill in whatever way you can and please get back to me with your response at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Daniel Tuttle

From: [REDACTED]
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#); [Sen. Bert Stedman](#); [Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins](#)
Subject: HB 220 - Support for
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 11:30:56 AM

Representative Ivy Spohnholz and Representative Zack Fields, House Labor and Commerce Committee Co-Chairs,

I am writing in support of HB 220.

As a recent teacher retiree from Petersburg School District, I know the important role quality educators have on the lives of Alaskan students. Alaska needs HB 220 to attract and retain educators that our students deserve.

I am in support of HB 220 and what the bill can do to support current and future educators in Alaska. HB 220 will provide public sector employees hired after 2006, which includes teachers, ESPs, police officers, firefighters, and Alaska State Troopers, the retirement they deserve. The language in HB 220 would provide stable retirement for teachers and HB 220 would not cost the state or local school districts more money than the current PERS 4 and TRS Defined Contribution retirement system.

It is time to fix PERS and TRS retirement system.

Sincerely,

Ginger Evens
[REDACTED]

From: [Jasmine Nickell](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: HB 220 Teacher Retirement
Date: Tuesday, November 9, 2021 3:03:15 PM

Hello,

I am a school counselor in the Fairbanks NSBSD, and I wanted to write in support of **HB 220**. Why? Because this affects all Alaskans. By providing better retirement for employees hired after 2006, we are investing in our state's future. Individuals who would be positively affected by this bill include educators, police officers, firefighters, and Alaska State Troopers. These members support the vital, core structures of our communities and we should be taking care of them in return. The COVID pandemic has brought an increasing amount of stress on these groups of citizens and those in public service carry a burden of the current World's hardships and struggles.

Why would we not want to take care of these essential workers, especially when we see that these positions are more and more going unfulfilled.

Thank You,

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[Jasmine Nickell ~ School Counselor](#)
[Randy Smith Middle School](#)



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From: [Nicole Stellan O'Donnell](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: HB 220 Testimony
Date: Friday, November 5, 2021 10:25:56 AM

Dear House Labor and Commerce Committee:

I wish to testify today on HB 220 and Alaska's broken Teacher's Retirement system.

I am a 20+ year public educator in Alaska, and grateful that I am in Tier 2. I worked most recently as an instructional coach, a position that supports and serves early-career educators in FNSBSD. All of the early career teachers I serve are Tier 3.

I know many of them are planning to leave as there is no incentive for them to stay in Alaska, the only state in the United States that offers no secure retirement to public educators. Recently, one young (and excellent educator) told me that she and her husband were waiting until the end of this year (her 5th year) to pull out of the state entirely. They planned to pull her vested interest out and use it for a downpayment on a house in a state that has a reasonable retirement for teachers. I couldn't, in good faith, encourage her to stay. She's doing the right thing for her and her family.

As a parent of two high schoolers, I'm disturbed that our retirement system provides such a strong disincentive for young teachers to remain in the state. In Fairbanks, a district traditionally not used to suffering teacher shortages, unfilled teaching positions abound. How will my own children have quality teachers when I, as an educator and instructional coach myself, can't in good faith encourage Tier 3 members to stay?

We have a big problem with retention, as explained in [this recent news article](#). Tier 3 is a big part of the problem. Please fix it.

Respectfully,

Nicole Stellan O'Donnell

From: [Christina Foster](#)
To: [Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson](#); [Rep. Harriet Drummond](#); [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: HB 220
Date: Saturday, November 20, 2021 4:20:05 PM

Hi, my name is Christina Foster. I previously taught in the Lower Yukon School District and Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District. I have been working with Anchorage School District since 2005. I am vested in TRS Tier II retirement. However, many of my colleagues aren't.

Staff morale is the lowest I have ever seen. The expectations put on us continue to grow. Our school district is fighting against us for adequate planning time, adequate health care, and initially proposed a 0% increase to our salaries over the next three years. There are currently 282 staff openings and a shortage of substitutes.

We are predicting that next year will be worse. Staff will be moving, retiring, and quitting at the end of this school year. The prospect for finding people to fill these positions is dismal.

The teachers who are in Tier III retirement are looking towards other careers since there is an availability of good job opportunities now. A defined retirement benefit plan would help retain staff who are looking at other options. It is the top reason that my certificated colleagues say they are thinking of changing careers.

HB 220 looks like a step in the right direction towards retaining and recruiting teachers to Alaska. I am asking that you support this. Our Alaskan teachers deserve this respect.

Thank you,

Christina Foster
Instructional Coach
Taku Elementary (Title 1 School)

From: [Katie Melrose](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Sen. Joshua Revak](#); [Rep. Calvin Schrage](#)
Subject: HB 220
Date: Friday, November 19, 2021 9:38:54 AM

Good morning,

I am writing in support of HB 220.

I am an educator with the Anchorage School district and have taught in Alaska for nine years. I take pride in educating, inspiring, and connecting with Alaskan youth. I like my job and I want to stay in Alaska.

I have a child also attending an ASD school with highly-skilled and dedicated teachers supporting her and her peers.

But, I am worried. As my husband and I plan for retirement, I am worried we will not have enough. We have discussed plans to move to a state with better teacher retirement. I am worried that my daughter's teachers will also leave. I am worried, when I hear many of my colleagues making plans to switch careers or move as well.

Alaska's retirement system is broken and as a result, our state also has the worst educator turnover in the country. Not only does this cost our state a lot financially, it has a negative impact on our students' learning and outcomes.

Please support HB 220 and show your dedication to Alaskan educators and Alaskan youth.

Thank you,
Katie Melrose

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Carole Bookless](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: HB 220
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 8:03:52 PM

To whom it may concern;

I am writing in support of proposed changes to the retirement system. I am a teacher. I am in Tier 3 and participate in a defined contribution plan. I would like to retire due to health reasons. I am 65 years old. According to the report that comes with my retirement updates, I need to work until I am in my mid 80's in order to retire with dignity. Even then, as I embrace my senior years, I have to educate myself on how to manage my portfolio in order to even make that scenario work.

When I came to Alaska to work, over 15 years ago, I was already vested in Social Security. As a government employee, I will now lose part of my benefit, up to 50%, when I retire. If anything, I am going backwards in terms of my retirement security.

If I were given the opportunity to move to a defined benefit retirement plan, I would.

I feel like I should try to express all the ways the current situation adversely affects me financially, emotionally and mentally, but it is too depressing. Even thinking about the situation saddens and demoralizes me.

Carole Bookless
Douglas, Alaska

From: [Jarred Rivera](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Sen. Bert Stedman](#); representative.jonathan.kreiss-tomkins@akleg.gov
Subject: HB 220
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 12:35:56 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a product of Alaska public schools having been a lifelong Sitkan. I chose this profession because I feel that there is nothing more rewarding than helping our young children, our future. I also chose this profession because it could offer me a good, stable income, and financial stability. After graduating college at Oregon State University with an exercise science degree, I pursued a Masters in Education. This school year I was offered a teaching job at the high school I graduated from in Sitka, my hometown. I of course accepted.

What I didn't know is In recent years there are positions left open for extra time in hopes of finding highly qualified applicants teachers. What I also didn't know is that after a couple of years of teaching, teachers move back to the lower 48 once they have experienced the Alaskan adventure. I've asked myself why are teachers coming and going? After talking to fellow teachers in my district, they all explain that the major change is the lack of a defined benefit option for our teachers. What I also didn't know is that Alaska teachers are the only public teachers in the nation who have no defined benefit system *and* are not eligible for Social Security. Had I known this before starting my Masters in Education, I most likely would have chosen a different career path but my passion for serving our children is too important to me.

Our children deserve the world-class education that I received growing up in Sitka. However, without a defined benefit system it difficult to attract new educators, and when we do, we can't keep them for long. HB 220 is a step in the right direction. How we treat our teachers directly affects the quality of education our children receive. The quality of Alaska's public schools directly affects our economy. Support Alaska's future by passing HB 220. Our teachers, our children and our state depend on it!

Jarred Rivera

Special Education

Sitka High School

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [Ben Collman](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Rep. Sara Hannan](#); [Rep. Andi Story](#); [Sen. Jesse Kiehl](#)
Subject: HB 220
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 11:53:03 AM

I encourage you to do all that you can to advance House Bill 220. I have been teaching within the state since the mid 90's, so this bill won't affect me directly, I have seen the consequences of the downgrading of teacher retirement firsthand, in the ability to attract teachers to Alaska. This is a problem that will only get worse as there is a teacher shortage nation-wide, and the substandard retirement compensation being offered by Alaska makes it even harder for Alaska to compete for employees.

Ben Collman
Juneau-Douglas High School

From: [Rebecca Himschoot](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Sen. Bert Stedman](#); [Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins](#)
Subject: HB 220
Date: Monday, January 17, 2022 3:06:43 PM

To the Committee Members,

Please carefully consider the testimony on HB 220 this week and pass it to the next committee of referral. If the legislature can do only one thing to support Alaska's students and improve educational outcomes across the state it is to support a viable retirement for educators.

While there are studies and research to back my position, I will offer only what I have personally experienced in nearly 30 years as an educator. As a recent graduate in Sitka in 1994 I had to teach in other places because there were so many more experienced candidates for the district to choose from. Last year the district was in the unfortunate position of hiring conditionally certified teachers as there were no other applicants. The impacts of the national teacher shortage are only beginning to be felt in a desirable district such as Sitka, but the rest of the state is experiencing this crisis in full already. House Bill 220 is a rational solution that will help make Alaska competitive with other states as we seek not only to attract educators but to keep the young teachers our districts invest in. While we can quantify the costs to districts of the documented practice of "teacher tourism" at \$20,000 per position, what is more difficult to measure is the impact to student learning. This unmeasurable expense is the most fundamental to our system of education, and the one HB 220 is designed to address directly.

Please pass this bill to the next committee for consideration.

Thank you!

Rebecca Himschoot

Sitka



From: [Darwin Feakes](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: HB220
Date: Tuesday, November 23, 2021 10:13:48 AM

22 November 2021

Dear House Members

I am a teacher in Haines and am writing this letter in support of HB220. This is my 34th year of teaching and my 11th in Alaska. I came here from Montana that does have a defined benefit retirement program and I know even as little as I get that I will get it until I die and my wife will after my death if she is alive (survivor benefit option). Alaska's current system is atrocious at best. When I retire here in another 5 years I will have no idea how long I can expect to draw from my retirement account. If the stock market does well, maybe for quite a while 25 years, if it crashes, I might get ZERO \$0.00 as it will be worth nothing. There is no way to know what I can depend on getting. I am lucky enough that this is my second career and since Montana also pays into Social Security that I will be able to draw a very reduced amount from it. There is NO security for Alaska's teachers in tier 3 retirement. My plans are to stay and continue to be an active part of my community and school after retirement but without some sort of retirement from Alaska with the high cost of living I will be forced to live down South with the little I get from Montana Teachers' Retirement and Social Security. I urge you to fix Alaska's retirement system. If you don't make it a defined benefit, then at least start paying into social security that has a known outcome at retirement. Your young teacher's cannot afford to not have a known retirement at the end of a career so are flooding South to a state that does offer this.

I Plead that you help save the education system in Alaska and make us able to compete with the rest of the U.S.

Darwin Feakes
Haines Borough School District Vocational Teacher

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [Fey, Janelle](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: HB220
Date: Tuesday, November 30, 2021 7:55:07 AM
Attachments: [Outlook-s032q4c3.png](#)

Greetings Fellow Government Employees,

As a teacher, I can empathize with the tough job you have to take care of all of your constituents, just as I try to take care of all of my students. My family attends public schools, we own a home in Anchorage, we vote in every election and we care deeply about building a future Alaska that has jobs, benefits, and a strong public system so our children can send their children to school here, work here and play here.

I am asking you to please pass HB220 so my family can stay in Alaska. I am one of the few Nationally Board Certified Teachers in the state, BP teacher of the year 2015 holding my Master's in education with 16 years of experience, 13 of which have been in Alaska. My family desperately wants to stay in Alaska but at this age, I am looking at what my future will hold in retirement. I have enough years left that I can move to a state and fully vest in a retirement system, thus contributing to the brain drain further. There is also the lure of affordable in-state tuition in other states. Yet, as you know, Alaska holds a magic that is hard to find other places and we need financial security for our public employees who have dedicated their careers to helping Alaska.

This is the time to give back teachers and others their dignity in retirement. Keep our family and families like ours in the state for the benefit of the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cheers,

Janelle Fey, NBCT
West High School
Anchorage, Alaska


Google Level 2 Certified Educator

LEVEL 2

CERTIFIED
Educator

Google for Education

From: [JaNelle Duhon](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson](#); [Rep. Harriet Drummond](#)
Subject: HB220/ We must pass retirement for teachers
Date: Friday, November 19, 2021 12:51:03 PM

Greetings,

As a fellow hard-working public employee, my heart is with you all as you strive to make our state a better place for Alaskans. I am writing in support of the bill HB220 that would help restore a decent retirement for educators. Though I have been in education for 16 years and a teacher in Alaska for 13 years I am still contemplating if this profession or state is where I need to be because it is my responsibility to secure my retirement and my family's financial future. The current retirement leaves this future in limbo. My daughter wants to be a teacher when she grows up and I am concerned about allowing her into a profession in this state where her hard work and dedication would not be backed up with real benefits. Please examine this bill and work hard to get action now, after so many years of educators waiting and hoping.

Thank you for your time.

Cheers
Janelle Fey

From: [Mike Vieira](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins](#); [Sen. Bert Stedman](#)
Subject: House Bill 220
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 3:42:22 PM

Legislative Representatives –

I write today to urge you to advance House Bill 220 out of the Labor and Commerce Committee and move it forward in the legislative process. Public Education across the country is experiencing a teacher shortage, and Alaska is not any different. The Monte Carlo Analysis commissioned by the Department of Administration in 2019 identifies Tier III teachers in the TRS system as only having a 31% chance of being successful in retirement – with success defined as 70% of final pay lasting for 30 years. Without access to social security, the traditional 3-legged stool of retirement security is dangerously unstable, with only two legs available. All the risk for retirement has been shifted to teachers, with no ability to secure access to Social Security, and only 32 investment options available to them within their accounts. A teacher working in Alaska, who is not keenly aware of how to manage investments is unfortunately working themselves toward a retirement of poverty.

Unfortunately, even in a place like Sitka, which traditionally had a surplus of qualified candidates for every position that became open has found itself having to shake the trees to find any qualified candidate for numerous secondary and elementary positions. In the last three years we have lost multiple teachers who have made a conscious decision to take their vested Alaska retirement earnings and move their careers to a state that offers not only a defined benefit retirement, but in most circumstances significant raises from their current salaries in Sitka. Unfortunately, Sitka, like many Alaskan districts is becoming a training ground for districts in the lower 48, who poach our teachers after their 5-year vesting period, leaving us to recruit new to teaching teachers, who then must be retrained, to the detriment of our students.

It is time to fix the mistake that was made in 2006 based on poor actuarial data, with a retirement that offers security and dignity to all public employees. House Bill 220 has been carefully calculated, with actuarial data and built-in mechanisms to adjust for the possibilities of unfunded liabilities. I urge you to move this out of your committee and forward to the next level of consideration.

Thanks for taking the time to hear the bill, and the consideration of my comments. I appreciate your time and your service to our great State.

Mike Vieira
Sitka High School
CTE Instructor
Sitka Education Association President

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [Emily Demmert](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins](#); [Sen. Bert Stedman](#)
Subject: In support of HB 220
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 2:50:30 PM

Dear Representatives,

Thank you for your time in seeking a way to fix our broken teacher retirement system for Tier III teachers.

I love teaching. I have been teaching for over twenty years in different capacities. When my children were young, I worked as an adjunct at UAS and as a tutor at Mt. Edgecumbe High School. I've been teaching fulltime in the Sitka School District for 12 years now and am part of the state's Tier III retirement system. I'm fortunate that my husband started teaching when Tier II retirement was offered so that we can have a decent retirement. We are planning to move after he retires so that I can have a retirement because I want to teach for many more years. I can return to my home state of California, make the same amount or more money that I make as a teacher in Sitka, experience a similar cost of living, have a governor that supports education, and qualify for a pension after 5 years of service.

We have three boys who I believe all have the emotional intelligence to become teachers, but we have warned them away from teaching in general and teaching in Alaska in particular because they could not make a decent living for the education required, especially regarding the retirement system.

Please fix this system by reinstating Social Security for teachers and by creating a pension system for Tier III teachers.

Sincerely,

Emily Demmert



Sitka High School
English teacher

From: [Frederique Charbonneau](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: Representative.Jonathan.Kreiss-Tomkins@akleg.gov; Senator.Bert.Stedman@akleg.gov
Subject: In Support of HB 220
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 11:18:11 AM

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to ask you to move forward with HB 220. I am a teacher in Sitka, and I also taught in Barrow/Utqiagvik, AK between 2008 and 2010. Between the time we lived in Utqiagvik and Sitka, my husband (who is an HS Math teacher) and I taught internationally. Because of COVID-19, we came back to Alaska to offer more stability to our children as they go through high school. We were also hoping to settle here permanently as Sitka offers a way of life that we would love to embrace.

Unfortunately, my husband and I are both Tier-III TRS members and the fact that we do not contribute to Social Security was only made clear to us when we came to Sitka. Because of these circumstances, we are seriously considering going back to international teaching in four and a half years when our children are done with high school. We both have over 15 years of experience teaching in different educational systems, and we have a lot to offer Sitka High School, but we also want to make sure that we can afford to retire and be able to live comfortably after having dedicated our lives to helping children become the best version of themselves. At this moment, we do not feel that we will have the financial security to do so if Alaska does not return to a defined benefit retirement for teachers. Any international school we teach at will offer us the same kind of matching contribution that is offered by Alaska (plus many more benefits like amazing and free health insurance) so in order for us to stay, there would need to be a dramatic change in the teacher retirement system.

The Alaska legislature needs to show Alaskan teachers that your priority is the quality education that students receive by employing and retaining highly qualified, experienced teachers who are happy in their work environment, feel valued and know that their future is secured.

If you truly care about Alaska's future, please move forward with this bill.

Sincerely,

Frederique Baillairge Charbonneau

From: [Shana Butler](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Rep. Ronald Gillham](#); [Sen. Peter Micciche](#)
Subject: In support of HB 220
Date: Sunday, January 16, 2022 4:49:47 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to voice my support of HB 220 and urge you to support it as well by cosponsoring it and working towards its passage.

I arrived from out of state in 2006 and signed my teaching contract in Alaska 1 month after Tier 3 came into effect. With each passing year, I see more and more teachers and administrators leave the state. Some come to Alaska for adventure and to see what our beautiful state has to offer... but unfortunately they don't stay after a year or so. We don't have much to offer them in the way of retirement. Our students are losing out every time one of them decides to go elsewhere.

Why am I still here? I worry about my retirement but I don't want to leave Alaska. I love my students and I love my district. I keep hoping for a change to our retirement system. When my colleagues (who are on Tier 1 or 2) ask me when I plan on retiring I have to tell them that I can't. I joke that I will be pushing a walker around the hallways. But it is no joke and what kind of retirement plan is that anyway?

We have got to end the high turnover rate and hold on to our valuable teachers and administrators. We are blowing money on training and retraining staff. We must return to offering one of the best retirement systems in the country and fix the broken system that we have. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Shana Butler

From: [REDACTED]
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: Pass HB 220
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 7:09:27 PM

Dear House Labor and Commerce Committee:

Please pass House Bill 220, legislation to restore a defined benefit to public employees hired after 2006. Passage of this legislation is absolutely essential to attract and retain qualified professionals and to avoid additional costs incurred through high turnover rates.

As a tier II educator, I would not have taught for the past 27 years in Alaska were it not for my current defined benefit protected by a constitutional guarantee. In fact, without a guaranteed pension, I might not have entered the profession at all. Public service pays less than the private sector, but the tradeoff has always been the retirement pension and medical benefits that offset a lower wage. To illustrate this, I began teaching in 1995 with a master's degree. I did not break \$50,000 until my 10th year of teaching, at which point I had also earned my national board certification, the equivalent a year of doctoral work. Many of my college classmates earned more in the first year of their chosen profession than I did in my 10th year. From this, it is obvious how critical a guaranteed retirement benefit is to attract the best and the brightest to teaching.

I've observed the damage done when Alaska moved to a defined contribution in 2006. Teacher turnover increased, gradually at first, but then accelerated until we reached an unprecedented level of new hires and vacancies in the Anchorage School District where I am currently employed. I have watched co-workers leave the state for teaching jobs that provide defined benefits. I have watched tier III colleagues leave the profession entirely after being told by financial advisors they won't have enough to maintain a satisfactory retirement on their 401K. Last year, for the first time ever, I saw two co-workers voluntarily quit mid-year; something I had never seen before now.

An Institute for Socio-economic Research (ISER) study which all of you have seen determined the cost to reinstate a defined benefit as negligible. In fact, it may be what's required to keep the PRS and TRS retirement funds solvent. With fewer employees contributing to State retirement funds over time, the more money the state legislature must appropriate to meet their constitutional obligation.

Individual school districts accrue additional costs as turnover increases, with the Anchorage School District estimating the cost of recruiting, hiring and training to fill a single vacancy at \$20,000. Currently, over 50% of the Anchorage School District's teachers are tier III employees. Employment trends indicate that the majority of these teachers will not continue working in the Anchorage School District to retirement age. HB 220 could change that by providing a stable financial future for teachers.

Departing from a defined benefit was the most irresponsible, ill-conceived, and

possibly costly mistake a previous state legislature ever made. This legislature has the opportunity to fix it. Let's honor the intent of the Constitution by reinstating defined benefits for public employees. Let's stop the brain drain by keeping our best employees in Alaska. Let's slow the employee turnover rates by providing a secure future for public servants. Let's reduce the cost to individual school districts that must undergo expensive hiring and training processes every year. Let's listen to our economists when they recommend returning to a defined benefit to keep our existing retirement systems solvent. Let's pass HB 220 and shepherd it through a floor vote expeditiously to avoid further workforce losses.

Thank you,
Thomas Pease
Anchorage School District

From: [KRISTEN ALLTON](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#); [Sen. Shelley Hughes](#); [Rep. DeLena Johnson](#)
Subject: Perspective from Tier3 TRS retirement
Date: Sunday, January 16, 2022 11:46:04 AM
Attachments: [Teacher Retirement Systems - A Ranking of the States - Bellwether Education Partners - Final Updated v11.12.21 \(002\).pdf](#)

To Whom it May Concern,

I'm a school psychologist for the Mat-Su Borough School District. This is my 10th year working in Alaska and I'm writing in support of HB-220. My family is approaching a decision point as to whether we need to move out of state. A large part of this decision is based on the current retirement system. My husband and I are both Tier 3. According to a recent 2021 study (Teacher Retirement Systems: A Ranking of the States) compares retirement systems across all states, Alaska earned F's on all areas measured. I attached the study for you to see how we stack up against other states.

Additionally, the schools are already experiencing significant teacher shortage. Not to mention specialists such as school psychologist, speech language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists are even more difficult positions to fill. The educational system is stressed and pushing people to the brink of leaving the state. In turn, this has devastating impacts on the education of our students. Please vote to pass HB-220. Let me know if you have any further questions.

I appreciate your time and effort on this issue,
Kristen Allton

Kristen Allton, Ed.S, NCSP, LPC – *School Psychologist*
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

From: [James Sampson](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: Reasonable Retirement for Educators
Date: Friday, November 19, 2021 1:17:07 PM

I strongly support the reintroduction of a retirement for educators. Presently they even lack social security. HB220 offers a reasonable alternative to our existing dilemma of no retirement and no substantial direction offered.

Thanks,

James E. Sampson

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From: [Brian Krauklis](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: Support for HB 220
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 8:34:00 PM

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to voice my support for HB 220. I believe it is crucial to have a decent retirement system for teachers and other public sector employees. If I were younger and considering moving to Alaska, the current retirement plan would have prevented me from moving here. A more reliable plan, as in HB 220, will encourage other teachers to not just work here for a short time and leave, but actually stay and become a permanent Alaskan. Thank you all for your efforts to make the improvements that are drastically needed in our current retirement system.

Sincerely,

Brian Krauklis



From: [Jennifer EF](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: Support for HB 220
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 7:52:09 PM

Good evening,

As an educator in Alaska hired by the Anchorage School District after July 2006 and having worked for the district for 11 years since that time and as a parent of a 2nd grade student in the Anchorage School District, I support HB 220 to provide educators more opportunities to secure a retirement plan that will work best for their families here in Alaska and help secure teacher retention and attract the best teachers for our children and students. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jennifer Edwards-Fahl

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Ryan Myers](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins](#); [Sen. Bert Stedman](#)
Subject: Support for HB 220
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 2:48:14 PM

Greetings, my name is Ryan Myers and I am currently a high school math teacher at Sitka High School, as well as a registered voter. **I am writing in support of HB 220.**

Earlier in my teaching career, I worked in Barrow/Utqiagvik for four years. I enjoyed teaching and coaching on the North Slope, and largely felt that I made a decent wage. Among other things, I instituted the first AP Calculus course on the North Slope and was looking forward to being a part of that community for many years to come. When I was hired, part of what sold me on going was that the district told me I would be in the Tier 2 retirement plan, which sounded good to me. Unfortunately, when I arrived, I was among the first to be placed in Tier 3.

Tier 3 teacher retirement is not competitive. Ultimately, my family and I left to teach abroad (for the last 10 years) because there was no real benefit to staying. I was given the same retirement package abroad, and I made much more money. **Had I been in Tier 2, I likely would never have left.** Due to Covid changing the nature of international teaching, I have returned to teach in Alaska. I have bought a home and would love to stay for years to come.

Unfortunately, I also need to think about my retirement and my future. If the retirement system doesn't change, I will likely return abroad to be able to save more money for retirement. Especially **since I am not paying into Social Security here, I feel I am actually being disincentivized to stay in Alaska!**

Fixing Alaskan teacher retirement will ABSOLUTELY keep my (teacher) wife and I in the state. Otherwise, we will likely leave when our boys are in college so we can afford to help pay for it and save for retirement.

Thank you for your service to the state, and I sincerely hope that you will support a teacher retirement system that incentivizes good teachers to both come and to stay.

Sincerely,
Ryan Myers

From: [Kelly Ballantyne](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: Support for HB 220
Date: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:03:47 PM

Hello,

I'm writing in support of HB 220. I'm a new teacher from Anchorage and my retirement plan is worse than the plans I've had in my last two jobs working for non-profits. When I tell people that I started teaching there is an assumption that there is a good retirement plan and when I explain the benefits I receive people are surprised.

If we want to recruit and retain quality educators we need to have a real retirement plan available to them.

Thanks for the work that you all do,

Kelly Ballantyne

From: [Senchantixay Beth](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: Support HB 220
Date: Monday, November 22, 2021 7:45:38 PM

As a registered Anchorage voter and a career educator of 25 years, I beg you to support HB 220.

I am in my 25th year of teaching, yet I have no social security or a pension. In my earlier career, I moved around a bit, every 2-4 years and was fortunate enough to teach internationally as well. Although I had an adventurous life due to my career allowing me to work in a variety of settings, I decided to move to Alaska to work on establishing a retirement. However, we all know how that has gone for any Tier 3 teachers, hired after 2006 (I just missed the cutoff). And yes, I have saved my whole life, and reinvested most of my salary lane increases, but this will not be sufficient for a secure future. Two or 3 medical procedures or emergencies, will put me and my family in the poor house. This should not be a stressor for a veteran teacher, who will be working for another 15-17 years.

Is it better for new teachers to choose other careers? Perhaps. Should I move to a state or choose another career that offers a pension and/or social security? Probably. However, I truly believe and want to fight for public education. We need qualified and experienced teachers.

I can't imagine that if the tables were turned, no pension and no social security for a career that you devoted yourself to, that you would sit back and accept it. Please give your full support to HB 220 and save the future of your educators.

Respectfully Submitted,
Beth Senchantixay

From: [Brook R](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: Teacher Retirement
Date: Friday, November 5, 2021 11:04:05 AM

Hello Esteemed Ladies and Gentleman of the House, Labor, and Commerce Committee,

My name is Cynthia Brook Crolius-Ross and I am a Middle School Teacher in Fairbanks, AK. I am on my 4th year teaching for FNSBSD. I moved to Alaska with my family after 7 years of teaching in the lower 48. 8 years is the magic number for vetting, meaning "putting in enough time" to get a full teacher pension at the age of retirement. I worked for 10 years in the private sector prior to becoming a teacher, but the second I signed my first teacher contract I forfeit the Social Security I paid into.

I am very disappointed that Alaska does not offer teachers a pension plan. This will affect my long term plans. I moved here with my family with the intention to work for the next 20+ years to retirement at 65. But a lump-sum retirement will not work with that plan. I do not know how long I will live after 65, but I do not feel comfortable knowing that it is highly likely I will outlive my money and die in poverty, a burden on my family despite working hard and paying into the system. Offering 403b's, etc is fine -- but most people who have then will also get social security, which is NOT lump sum. I do not feel good about the idea that my retirement is solely depend on the health of the Stock Market.

Young and mid-career teachers like me will not stay in Alaska for the long haul without a Pension Plan. I talk with colleagues every day and they confirm this. Currently, unless teacher pensions are reinstated for Tier 3 and 4, I plan on returning to the lower 48 for the last 8 years of my career so I can get that necessary Pension. My children will be grown then, and I would return for summers. It will be unfortunate, but a Pension is that important. (I am also praying that a lawsuit will overturn the decision that teachers can't get the social security they paid into.) A compromise might be to only allow teachers to pull from a Pension plan at or after the age of 65, or increasing the number of years needed to be vetted.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Cynthia Brook Crolius-Ross
Ryan Middle School Science Teacher
FNSBSD

From: [Dan Parks](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: Teachers Retirement
Date: Thursday, November 11, 2021 6:14:08 PM

Dear Alaska State Legislature,

I'm writing this on behalf of myself Kristen Mcnamara a 6th year Educator in the State of Alaska. I support restoring a defined benefit/pension type retirement for teachers. I was hired after 2006 and am part of the new defined contribution 401K type retirement plan. As I think about my future career as a teacher and my family I worry that without a pension or Social Security to fall back on, I may run out of money in old age. I think providing a pension will help retain more teachers in Alaska, and make our state more competitive with other states that currently offer better retirement benefits to teachers.

Thank you.

From: [whitney todd](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Rep. Grier Hopkins](#)
Subject: Testimony in support of HB 220
Date: Tuesday, January 18, 2022 3:20:58 PM

Hello,

My name is Whitney Arvey. I am from Fairbanks, Alaska and I am writing to you to implore you to support house bill 220.

I was born and raised in Fairbanks, Alaska, graduated from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and have taught in the Fairbanks Northstar Borough School District for the past 12 years. I used to love it here and thought Fairbanks would be my home until I retire, but as the years have progressed, and I've thought more about my future, I have found more and more reasons to want to leave. A good job is usually enough to keep someone planted, but being a teacher is no longer considered a "good job" especially if you're in the tier 3 or 4 retirement system, which I am.

In my tenure, I have seen several amazing teachers leave the profession or leave the state to continue their profession else where. Teaching is not easy, the pay isn't great, the hours are long, the stress is high, and the profession is no longer respected, but our workload, requirements, and class sizes continue to increase. Tier 2 teachers are soon retiring or have already. What is the incentive for new teachers to want to work in Alaska? Certainly not our retirement system, but this is something we can change.

A strong educational system is foundational to a strong economy. Please support Alaska by supporting teachers.

Please move HB 220 to the next committee of referral.

Thank you,
Whitney Arvey

From: [Susan Brandt-Ferguson](#)
To: [House Labor and Commerce](#)
Subject: Yes to HB 220
Date: Saturday, November 6, 2021 10:15:57 AM

To Whom It May Concern,

As a product of Alaska public schools, the daughter of retired Alaska teachers and a 25-year veteran Alaskan teacher myself, I have a strong love for Alaska public schools. I chose my profession out of a love for teaching but had also witnessed first-hand that it could offer me a good, stable income; and that if I committed my life to it, financial stability through all my days. After attending college in Washington and teaching out-of-state for a couple years, I was thrilled to land a job in Sitka—something I thought would take much longer to accomplish, considering the large number of applicants the district received for every teaching position posted.

In my 25 years in the Sitka School District, I have served on several hiring committees for the music department. In the early 2000's, we had stacks of applications to wade through, with little to no outreach, promotion or recruitment. In recent years we have left positions open for extra time, scouring the landscape for potential and hoping for more highly qualified applicants. In addition, part of the reason I have been on so many hiring committees for music teachers in the Sitka School District is because after a couple of years, people move on—once the Alaskan adventure is over, there is little that holds them here. What has changed? Not Sitka's vibrant community, not the stunning landscape or quality of life in our town, not even the reputation of our school district—yet. The major change is the lack of a defined benefit option for our teachers. To add insult to injury, Alaska teachers are the only public teachers in the nation who have no defined benefit system *and* are not eligible for Social Security.

Our children deserve the world-class education that I received growing up in Sitka. However, without a defined benefit system it is a fluke when we attract the brightest and the best, and when we do, we can't keep them for long. HB 220 is a step in the right direction. How we treat our teachers directly affects the quality of education our children receive. The quality of Alaska's public schools directly affects our economy. Support Alaska's future by passing HB 220. Our teachers, our children and our state depend on it!

Sincerely,

Susan Brandt-Ferguson

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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