



# ALASKA CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

*"Walking Alaska's toughest beat."*

Re: Correctional Officer Letter of Support for HB 220

February 15, 2022

Representative Hopkins,

The Alaska Correctional Officers Association represents 940 Correctional Officers in the State of Alaska. Just like all other Alaska Public Safety Officers, Correctional Officers put their lives on the line every day. Alaska is in the middle of the most significant Law Enforcement recruiting and retention crisis in our history. A root cause of this crisis is Alaska's defined contribution retirement system, which simply is not competitive with other Law Enforcement agencies' plans throughout the country.

The State-funded 2016 CGL Study of the Alaska DOC found, *"[o]ur analysis indicated that a number of facilities are currently operating with staffing levels insufficient to meet basic security operational requirements."* The Department of Corrections, on average, loses 120 Correctional Officers per year. In calendar year 2021, we lost over 150 Correctional Officers. This is a 16.2% turnover in just one year. The Tier IV retirement system does not offer sufficient incentive for Officers to stay past their initial five years of service. The Association constantly hears from Officers who are leaving the DOC after five years because *there is no reason for them to stay*.

The number of Officers we lose every year has serious safety, security, and financial implications for the State. Every time the DOC loses an experienced Officer, we are forced to backfill that position with an inexperienced Officer. When there are over 150 new Officers per year it systematically compromises safety and security and requires additional funds to be dedicated to training. This leads to additional assaults and other safety and liability situations that cost the State of Alaska millions of dollars. It is essential that the State address Alaska's Correctional Officer retention crisis and HB 220 is a positive step towards that goal.

The Alaska Correctional Officers Association fully supports the passage of HB 220, believing that it will help curb the recruitment and retention problems plaguing the Department of Corrections today. Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional information.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Randy McLellan  
President, Alaska Correctional Officers Association