

Doniece Gott

From: Janice Banta <jbanta@mac.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 2:01 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB 78

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 78 to ensure that Alaska's current public employees have some modicum of support in their retirement years. I am a retired public employee having worked for the State as a Guardian ad litem (GAL) and subsequently for the Anchorage School District as a School Counselor. These were demanding, yet highly rewarding careers. Throughout my service, I worked long hours, as did my colleagues, under circumstances of incredible stress and high stakes decision-making, particularly in my capacity as a GAL. At times, the trauma we witnessed was overwhelming, but we worked as a team to ensure that the best interest of children were served.

My subsequent work experience as a School Counselor, was somewhat more balanced. Children, families and staff often experienced trauma as well, but having a counselor in the school helped ensure that there was support, guidance, and resources for all students. Again, I worked long hours and accessed special training throughout my service to ensure my schools were served with the best support available. I was struck by the dedication of teachers in every school I was posted...working long hours, providing materials the schools couldn't afford and giving up precious family time on weekends to ensure they were prepared for their students in the week to come.

In retirement, I benefit greatly from the pension system in place during my work years. A pension comparable to those provided in every state except current day Alaska. This is shameful and needs to be rectified. Our state is losing residents to out-migration, especially seen in the loss of public servants (like Ben Walker, 2013 Presidential Award Winner for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, 2018 Alaska State Teacher of the Year, and 2019 recipient of National Shell NSTA Science Teaching Award) is very disturbing. This family's loss to Alaska was preventable and it's high time to reverse the trend of professionals leaving our state by instituting a reasonable pension system for all public employees.

Sincerely,
Janice A. Banta
Resident of Anchorage, AK

Doniece Gott

From: Todd Anderson <toddanderson907@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 11:55 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Pensions for Public Service!

To the Honorable Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

My name is Todd Anderson, and I have proudly served the state of Alaska for the last 18 years. I am writing to you today not just as an employee, but as a dedicated member of this community who wants to stay here.

Currently, the lack of a defined-benefit pension creates a "revolving door" culture. For many of my colleagues, the 401(k)-style system isn't a retirement plan—it's an exit strategy. It encourages people to save every penny possible, only to take that portable wealth and move to a lower-cost-of-living state the moment they vest or they have accumulated enough wealth to leave.

I don't want to leave. I have spent nearly two decades building a life here, gaining specialized institutional knowledge, and braving the unique challenges of Alaskan service. However, the current system forces a difficult choice:

- **The Pension Path:** Provides the long-term security necessary to offset Alaska's high cost of living, allowing seasoned professionals to retire and remain in the state—spending their retirement dollars in our local economy.
- **The Current Portable 401k Path:** Forces us to look at our careers as a countdown. Without the stability of a pension, the logical financial move is to flee to the Lower 48 to make a 401(k) stretch further.

By restoring a Tier III-like pension option, you aren't just "offering a benefit." You are choosing to **retain talent** and ensure that the people who understand Alaska's infrastructure, safety, and services actually stay to lead the next generation.

We need a system that rewards those of us who want to call Alaska home for a lifetime, not just for a career. I urge you to support the return of a defined-benefit pension to keep our workforce and our future right here in the Great State of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Todd Anderson State Employee Since 2008

Doniece Gott

From: Dan Polta <danpolta@dbsd.org>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 11:53 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Cc: Dan Polta
Subject: HB78 Testimony

Senate Finance Committee,

I'm writing to provide testimony on HB78. My name is Dan Polta, I'm the superintendent of the Denali Borough School District.

I am generally very supportive of returning our teachers and staff members to a defined benefit retirement system. I believe this will provide the assurance in retirement that will help more our teachers and staff members stay and serve our Alaskan children.

I am, unfortunately, also very concerned about the additional costs to my district as an employer the transition would impose. HB 78 would return the employer contribution rates to 12.56% and 22% for TRS and PERS respectively. This change would add costs to our small district of ~\$400,000 or 3% of our projected FY27 budget.

This additional cost to our district, and others across the state, is not tenable given our current deficits and fiscal constraints. To offset this cost increase, an increase to the BSA of ~\$300 would be needed to have a cost neutral impact. This figure is based only on rough calculations for our small district.

A similar impact to the State of Alaska as an employer can be seen in the fiscal note prepared by Legislative Finance.

As you continue to move forward in returning our teachers and staff to a defined benefit retirement system, action must also be taken cover the overall cost of this shift to the school districts and municipalities. Otherwise this improvement will actually weaken our public education system due to the ongoing underinvestment by the State of Alaska in our children.

Sincerely,

Dan Polta
Superintendent
Denali Borough School District
P.O. Box 280
Healy, AK, 99743
1 (907) 683-2278
danpolta@dbsd.org

Doniece Gott

From: Conner Belcher <cbelcher@ucsd.net>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 11:52 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support for HB 78 – Defined Benefit Retirement for Alaska Educators

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Conner Belcher, and I am a kindergarten teacher in Unalaska. I am writing to express my strong support for HB 78 and the reinstatement of a defined benefit retirement plan for Alaska's teachers and public employees.

Alaska is currently the only state in the nation that does not offer teachers access to either a pension system or Social Security. This places our state at a significant disadvantage when recruiting and retaining qualified educators. In rural and remote communities especially, this gap makes it extremely difficult to attract teachers who are willing to build long-term careers here.

At the start of this school year, approximately 5,000 Alaska students began the year without a certified teacher in their classroom. As an educator working directly with young learners, I see firsthand how critical stability and consistency are to student success. When classrooms experience high turnover, instruction is disrupted, relationships are broken, and the sense of security students need to thrive is weakened.

In 2024 alone, 17% of teachers and 27% of principals left their districts. These numbers represent lost experience, diminished mentorship, and significant financial strain on school districts. The Anchorage School District estimates that it costs roughly \$27,000 to recruit and onboard each new teacher. Investing in a defined benefit plan is not simply about enhancing retirement benefits; it is a strategic and cost-effective approach to improving retention and strengthening school communities over the long term.

Turnover rates directly affect student achievement. When educators feel secure about their future, they are more likely to remain in their communities, invest in their schools, and build lasting relationships with families. A defined benefit retirement plan would help restore Alaska's competitiveness and send a clear message that we value the professionals who educate our children.

As HB 78 moves through the Senate Finance Committee, I respectfully urge you to support this legislation. I hope careful consideration will be given to how this bill can strengthen Alaska's education system for years to come.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and commitment to Alaska's students.

Sincerely,
Conner Belcher

Doniece Gott

From: Lauren Casey <laurenwillert@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 1:38 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Bring back the pension

To whom it may concern,

I am a teacher in their seventh year of teaching and tier 3. I am a born and raised Alaskan who loves their home state! A pension would change my longevity plans as well as invest in me to the same level that I am investing in my students. Our students deserve teachers who are in it for the long haul and are supported in retirement. Our state is losing incredible educators to other states that have defined benefit plans, all public servants deserve to be valued for their careers.

Thank you

Lauren Casey

Kindergarten teacher and proud Alaskan

Doniece Gott

From: Brian Rozell <brianrozell@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 11:41 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB 78: Retirement Systems; Defined Benefit Option

I am writing in SUPPORT of HB 78: the Defined Benefit Option. As an Alaskan educator in TRS tier 3, I have no current incentive to remain in education or remain in Alaska. A defined benefit retirement plan would attract more educators to Alaska and help ensure they remain here for their careers.

Brian Rozell
Fairbanks, Alaska

Doniece Gott

From: Irene Bortnick <ibortnick@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 10:21 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Cc: Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson; Rep. Alyse Galvin
Subject: Support for HB78 Defined Benefits/Retirement

Please support HB 78 which will provide a retirement system that public employees, especially teachers and first responders, can count on. We have seen the dire consequences in our public employment sector of not having a retirement package for the last number of years. We cannot attract or retain the skilled employees on whom we rely for these essential services.

When our 4 children (now successful adults) were going through the Anchorage School District in the mid 80's and 90's, education was strong and often at the forefront of new programs. It was a district of which we could be proud. We can only get back to that place if we put money into it and HB 78 is one of the means to do that.

Thank you,
Irene Bortnick

Doniece Gott

From: Brian Brubaker <bkb044@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 10:23 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Cc: Rep. Alyse Galvin; Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson
Subject: HB78 Defined Benefits/Retirement - Written Testimony

Hello members of the Alaska Senate Finance Committee.

I would like to express my support for HB78.

The public employee pension - aka defined benefit - was dropped in 2006 (20 years ago!).

My question is - do we love our children?

Maybe the answer is no, we don't love our children. Maybe I love my child, but I don't love yours. Maybe I care that my kid gets a good teacher, but I don't care what kind of teacher your kid has. Maybe I don't care if your kid's teacher has a pension or not. Maybe I'd rather get a bigger PFD than have your kid's teacher get a pension.

If that's the case, then we're a community of selfish people who just want our handouts and to be left alone. Pretty sad.

I don't think the constituents you heard from last year about overriding that K12 funding veto believe that.

I love my child. I did everything in my power to make sure my kid got the best education she could get. Read to her. Helped her with homework. Got her into activities.

But really, the best education requires the best teachers. Which means competitive pay and benefits. It means they need a defined benefit pension and social security to pair with a 401k - they need all three stools of retirement.

Those Alaskan leaders who discontinued public employee pensions in 2006 decided Alaska should be the only state in the union that doesn't give pensions to teachers. Teacher pensions were too expensive, they said then, and many say the same now. 20 years later, we're stuck paying unbelievably high prison bills. Is that prison bill going to go down if we keep denying pensions to

teachers? That's penny-wise and pound foolish. Teacher pensions are an investment we make now to avoid bigger problems later. The status quo started in 2006 really just keeps getting more expensive for each year that goes by.

I got lucky. One of my daughter's teachers was Ben Walker at Romig Middle School. He is dedicated. Has 20+ years of experience. Is award winning. My daughter thrived. The best part - he is part of our community.

Better make that WAS part of our community. Ben Walker recently wrote an op-ed in ADN: "We were honored as Alaska Teachers of the Year. Now we can no longer stay."

Every Alaskan kid needs a teacher like him. We love our children. Please pass this bill.

Brian Keith Brubaker
2980 Drake Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99508
(907) 360-9374 mobile
bkb044@yahoo.com

Doniece Gott

From: Kelly Buxton <kellybux@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 10:40 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Please Support HB 78

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature and Senate,

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 78 to return Alaska's teachers and public safety workers to a defined benefit pension system.

I have taught in Sitka, Alaska for the past 18 years, and I have seen firsthand how the current retirement system affects recruitment and retention. Too many talented educators leave Alaska for states that offer more secure retirement benefits. This instability impacts our students' achievement and our communities.

[According to Dianne Hirshberg of the UAA Center for Education Policy Research at ISER:](#)

- The 5 school districts with the LOWEST turnover had 85.8% of students scoring proficient in reading.
- The 5 school districts with the highest turnover had only 46.9% of students scoring proficient in reading.

A defined benefit pension would provide the stability needed to attract and keep experienced professionals who are committed to serving Alaska long-term.

I respectfully urge you to support House Bill 78.

Sincerely,
Kelly Buxton M.Ed.
Sitka, Alaska

Doniece Gott

From: William Ennis <bennisak@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 10:45 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB 78

Dear Sir or Madame,

My name is Willian Ennis, a 46-year resident of Alaska. I taught school in Anchorage (ASD), with some success, for 25 years. As a retired public employee with many, many friends still in service to the state and city, I implore you to reinstate a defined benefit program.

Our state is hemorrhaging teachers: Everyone knows that. Of course, we're also laying off hundreds of teachers, as well. The state of education in my state is beyond deplorable.

Without Social Security, with lower than national average wages, with diminishing numbers of jobs, no one should be surprised, but at some point there will be a need to hire a few teachers. A good start is to offer a defined benefit plan. Higher wages will help, but that's another issue.

Consider offering a defined benefit plan and allow teachers to have some light at the end of their 25-year tunnel. It's an investment for our students, our kids. They deserve the same great public education that I (and probably you) received in public schools and it's time that we begin the long road toward delivering it.

Doniece Gott

From: Ricky Lind <lind.ricky@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 10:59 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Fwd: 📧 Action Alert: Testimony needed! 📧

Good morning Friends,

Thank you for accepting written testimony for HB78, which is something close to my heart as an educator, youth mentor, and rooted member of the Indigenous community.

Music was my favored subject area in elementary, middle, and high school; I graduated from Dillingham City School District in 2002 and returned in 2007 as the K-12 Music teacher.

I taught for DCSD six years, and during that time my team and I had endured 4 different middle/high school principals. I decided to return to college and pursue a principal certification which I achieved in 2015. Mentors, professors, and advisors encouraged me to apply outside DCSD for experience and Anchorage School District hired me. Moving outside of Dillingham had promised professional growth, but it also sparked personal growth as I had decided to begin my sobriety journey in that moment [and have since maintained sobriety].

In my nine-year tenure at ASD, I have since worked in Title 1 schools, language immersion schools, an ABC school, and a Waldorf-inspired school; after pandemic, teaching became more a curriculum facilitation than a valued experience. Attendance became widely-known as feeling "optional," and schools became so short-staffed that extra duties such as bus, lunch, and recess duty all seemed to have taken precedence to anything and everything else related to delivering quality content to students.

In 2023, my financial advisor visited me in regard to my State of Alaska TRS account, as managed by Empower Retirement; they confirmed that if I kept my contributions the same, my projected payout would be estimated \$4,000.00 per month after 39 years of teaching service [which my advisor warned would not be much a payout considering projected inflation in 2040]. My advisor introduced the idea of a Traditional IRA, which would double my original projection so long as I rolled the account and did not draw from it. I said to them "it sounds like you're asking me to quit my job?" They said "no, I'm asking you to follow your heart."

At the time, I was delivering canned curriculum from the district website to my students, was assigned all duties possible, and all classes moved to an hour per class (even kindergarten); my administration reported my schedule and duties were not going to change the following year. By the end of the school year, I had suffered two stomach ulcers so I ultimately decided to change careers and roll my Alaska TRS to a Traditional IRA. I currently mentor Indigenous interns aged 14-17 who are interested in health and administrative careers for a local nonprofit.

And it has now been two years outside the classroom, and my retirement deposit has grown 20%.

Often times, we choose the public workforce because we intrinsically prefer to help and serve others--- please support HB78!

Blessings,

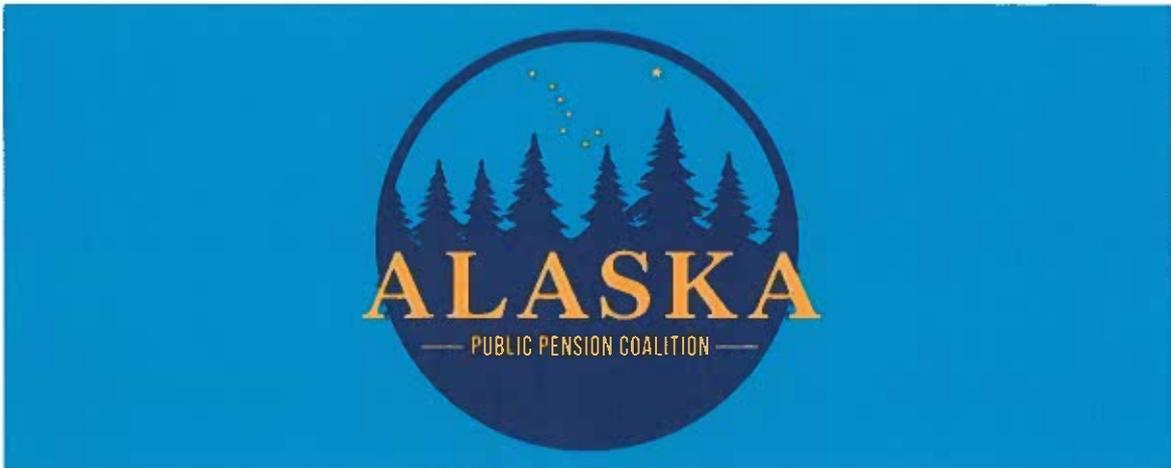
----- Forwarded message -----

From: **AK Public Pension Coalition** <admin@publicpensions.org>

Date: Fri, Feb 27, 2026 at 2:16 PM

Subject: 🚨 Action Alert: Testimony needed! 🚨

To: <lind.ricky@gmail.com>



Dear Fellow Pension Advocate,

House Bill 78, the legislation designed to provide Alaska's public workforce with the retirement security they deserve, is in the Senate Finance Committee.

On Monday, March 3, they will hear public testimony. ***We want lawmakers to hear why YOU believe Alaska needs pensions for public service!***

Why it matters: We need to keep our momentum! We want Senators to know that HB 78 must pass this year!

You can **call in your testimony** or **submit written testimony** by emailing senate.finance@akleg.gov.

When:

Monday, March 3, 2026, at 1:30 pm

Call-in Numbers:

Anchorage: 907-563-9085

Juneau: 907-586-9085

Other: 1-844-586-9085 (Toll-free)

What we're saying:

- We just learned the news this week that [two of Alaska's Teachers of the Year are leaving the state](#) in search of a better future for their family.

- After 20 years of the failed Defined Contribution experiment, it is time to restore pensions for public service.
- The cost of doing nothing is too high—lawmakers must take action before the stakes get even higher.

Phone Testimony Tips: Your testimony on retirement security should be clear and concise, highlighting why HB 78 is good for Alaska’s workers and communities.

- Aim for 1-2 minutes, as compelling testimony doesn't need to be long.
- Write down and practice your statement.
- Focus on your personal story and what pensions mean to you.
- Thank the committee for their attention, time, and focus on this critical priority.

Thank you for your continued support for Alaska’s public workforce – your voice and your actions make us stronger!

In solidarity,

The Alaska Public Pension Coalition

Sent via ActionNetwork.org. To update your email address, change your name or address, or to stop receiving emails from Alaska Public Pension Coalition, please [click here](#).

--

-Ricky Lind, Jr.
he/him/his
BMusEd., Ed.M., CWE

**Southcentral Foundation RAISE Program
NIEA Fiscal Committee**

Doniece Gott

From: Linda O'Bannon <lindaobannon77@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 11:08 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB 78

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 78. I am particularly concerned about teacher retention in our state. We are losing good teachers because they don't have a defined benefit retirement. It is particularly a problem because they don't earn social security benefits in public school teaching in Alaska.

Please, please for the sake of public schools adopt a defined benefit retirement program.

I am 78 years old and a 49 year Alaska resident. I remember when we had great schools in our State.

Thanks for considering my views.

Linda O'Bannon
1040 Potlatch Cir, Anchorage, AK 99503

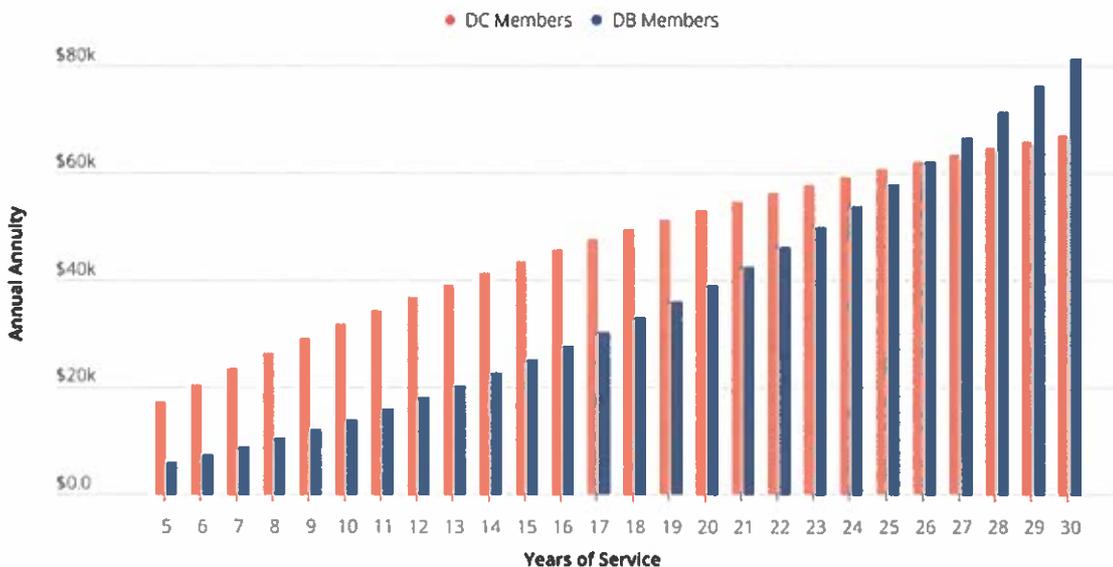


Alaska Public Employees' Retirement System and Teachers' Retirement System

State's DC Is a Better Benefit than a Pension for Most Alaska Public Workers

Alaska lawmakers are considering eliminating the state's defined contribution (DC) pension plan for government workers, but doing so would eliminate some of the advantages for an increasingly mobile workforce. A defined benefit (DB) pension structure concentrates benefits only on those with longer tenures, often at the expense of most state workers who move on to other opportunities after 5 to 15 years. Today's teachers and government employees would be better served with more, not fewer, retirement options to reflect the realities of the more mobile workforce. Instead of imposing lower retirement benefits on most of the state's future hires with a mandatory DB plan, policymakers should keep the DC plan open as an option for those who would like to take advantage of its inherent advantages.

The DC benefit grows faster for most new hires. Analysis of Alaska's current DC benefit, comparing the post-employment annual benefit earned to that of the legacy pension plan, indicates that someone hired at the age of 30 is better off in the DC plan until their 26th year of service.



Pension benefits accrue more slowly and are more vulnerable to inflation for workers who leave the system after 5-20 years.

Retirement savings in a DC plan have the advantage of growing more steadily, and inflation doesn't erode their purchasing power.

Source: Pension Integrity Project benefit analysis of Alaska PERS DC and legacy DB plan for an individual hired at age 30. Assumed annual return of 7%. Values are adjusted for inflation. For more information and access to the analysis, go to: <https://reason.org/commentary/most-workers-value-alaskas-defined-contribution-plan-surpasses-traditional-pension/>

Very few of Alaska's public employees stay in their jobs long enough to enjoy the advantages of the DB pension. According to assumptions used by PERS, 50% of new public safety hires are expected to leave the system by year 10. About 60% leave before their 20th year.

Bottom Line: Eliminating Alaska's DC plan would **reduce** the retirement benefits for the majority of newly hired police, firefighters, teachers, and other public employees. Instead of using PERS and TRS to penalize these workers, lawmakers should continue to offer retirement plan options that provide the flexibility and meet the needs of the state's workforce.

PENSION INTEGRITY PROJECT CONTACTS

- Leonard Gilroy, Director (len.gilroy@reason.org)
- Zachary Christensen, Managing Director (zachary.christensen@reason.org)





House Bill 78 Would Expose Alaska to Billions in Additional Costs

Alaska House Bill 78 would reopen the defined benefit (DB) pension systems for new hires and allow all teachers and public workers currently in the defined contribution (DC) retirement plan to use their DC account balances to purchase past service in the defined benefit pension plan. This "past service" purchase mechanism would put an enormous amount of financial risk on the state in year one and beyond. Despite measures to share any future public pension costs between employers and employees, this move could realistically add \$7 billion in additional costs to future state budgets and reintroduce Alaska to significant pension risk, the same risk that generated over \$8 billion in state pension debt and spurred the 2005 pension reform that closed Alaska's DB pension plan to new hires in the first place.

House Bill 78's estimated costs are dependent on a flawed discount rate. The claim that HB 78's proposed changes would not require any additional state funding relies on the state's pension systems' current investment return assumption being met. Alaska's pension plans would need to achieve 7.25% annual returns on investments for decades to avoid additional costs.

- Overly-optimistic investment return assumptions were a major contributor to the \$7.2 billion debt that is still owed on Alaska's legacy pension plans, the Alaska Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) and Teachers' Retirement System (TRS).
- **Since 2001, Alaska's pension plans have earned just 5.8% annual returns on average.**
- Nationally, the average assumed rate of return used by public pension systems is around 6.9%, so Alaska's current 7.25% return rate assumption is rosier than most other states.
- The discount rate is used when pricing the amount needed from employees to purchase their "past service." The plan continuing to earn under 7.25% or dropping that assumed rate of return in the future would add hundreds of millions of dollars in new unfunded liabilities.

HB 78 could cost Alaska an additional \$7 billion over the status quo. Actuarial analysis of Alaska PERS and TRS that anticipates market stress over the next 30 years similar to market conditions from 2001-2024 shows HB 78 likely exposes the state to significant additional costs.

	Status Quo	HB 78
Total Employer Contribution (2025-54)	\$30.9 billion	\$34.6 billion
Unfunded Liability (2054)	\$2.7 billion	\$6.1 billion
All-in Cost to Employers	\$33.6 billion	\$40.7 billion

Source: Pension Integrity Project 30-year actuarial forecast of Alaska PERS and TRS. The scenario applies recession returns in 2026-29 and 2040-43 and 6% returns in all other years. Values are adjusted for inflation.

Bottom Line: HB 78 could cost Alaska more than \$7 billion in the coming decades. Since most public employees leave their positions before being fully eligible for their pension benefits, this could be very costly legislation that only benefits a relatively small group of workers.

PENSION INTEGRITY PROJECT CONTACTS

- Leonard Gilroy, Director (len.gilroy@reason.org)
- Zachary Christensen, Managing Director (zachary.christensen@reason.org)



Doniece Gott

From: Coffey, Juanita J (DOL) <juanita.coffey@alaska.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 1:12 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Cc: Rep. Donna Mears
Subject: Support for Reinstatement of Pension Retirement Plan

Dear Union Leadership,

I am writing to express my strong support for the effort to reinstate the pension retirement plan, and to share my personal story in hopes that it helps illustrate why this issue is so important.

Twenty years ago, I was involved in a devastating accident in which I was run over by a drunk driver. I spent three months in the hospital and was told I might never walk again. I had to relearn how to walk, step by step, through determination and daily effort. After years of recovery and living with chronic pain, I finally reached a point at age 55 where I felt strong enough to return to full-time work.

When I accepted a position with the Department of Labor, I believed I was beginning a chapter that would allow me to rebuild some financial security and eventually retire with dignity. I have now dedicated nearly a decade of service to the state. However, the current retirement plan available does not provide the stability or security needed for someone in my situation. Waiting additional years under the existing plan still would not provide enough to live on comfortably.

I do not want to work until I am 70 years old. Although I show up each day and give my best, I continue to live with chronic pain. It grows harder each morning to get up, and I am exhausted by the end of each workday. I am proud of the work I do, and I am grateful to be able to contribute—but I also hope to retire while I still have some quality of life left.

The reinstatement of the pension plan would make a profound difference for me and for others who have dedicated years of service later in life or under difficult circumstances. A pension represents stability, dignity, and recognition of our commitment to public service.

I respectfully urge you to continue fighting for the reinstatement of the pension plan. For employees like me, it is not simply a benefit—it is the difference between insecurity and the ability to retire with peace of mind.

Thank you for your continued advocacy and for considering my perspective.

Respectfully,

Juanita Coffey

Employment Services Technician 2
Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Anchorage Midtown Job Center
Seafood Unit
3301 Eagle Street, Suite 102
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
juanita.coffey@alaska.gov

907-269-4520

[Alaska Economic Trends](#)

Alaska Economic Trends is a monthly magazine that covers a broad range of economic issues. Click the link above to view the current electronic magazine, search articles and archives, and sign up for a FREE electronic subscription.



CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This e-mail message, including any attachments, is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain confidential and privileged information. Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure, or distribution is prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender by replying to the e-mail and destroying all the original message copies.

“Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it is amazing what they can accomplish” ~Sam Walton

Doniece Gott

From: Ryan Howe <rhowe@wpsd.us>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 1:06 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB 78 Comments

To the members of the Senate finance committee,

Hello, and thank you for reading my testimony. I am a 16 year teacher in Wrangell, Alaska. I moved here in 2008 from Michigan. I was teaching in a high need field and Alaska had many teaching opportunities in rural, northern districts. I had planned on settling in Wrangell with my family and retiring from our school district. Unfortunately, my wife and I have to consider uprooting our 4 kids and transferring to a district in a state with a more competitive retirement system. Not only do teachers in Alaska lack a defined pension plan, we also do not contribute to social security. Therefore, we will retire with a 401K and a partial Social Security check based on work credits from before moving to Alaska. That is not a retirement plan. My wife and I are seriously concerned that we will be in poverty if we retire.

Please consider the passage of HB 78, which would allow teachers like us who love Alaska and work every day to help grow the state's future, to remain here. Without a more secure retirement system, teachers like us will continue to flee the state.

Thank you for your time,

--
Ryan Howe
Special Education Coordinator
Wrangell Public Schools

Confidentiality Notice: This electronic mail message may contain confidential and/or privileged information. This message, including any attachments, is intended solely for the use of the individual or entity named above. If the reader of this e-mail message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any review, disclosure, copying or distribution of this communication is expressly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please immediately notify the sender by reply e-mail and delete any of the original message.

Doniece Gott

From: Kathy P <kprivratsky65@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 1:00 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support for Defined Benefits in Alaska

I am writing to support bringing back the Defined Benefit for Teachers, Firefighters, etc. I am fortunate to be a Tier II retiree. Alaska is losing too many educators because of reduced benefits and/ or no Social Security. Why are we surprised that qualified people no longer want to come to Alaska? The pay is average, class sizes are big, the Governor and many legislatures do not want to increase funding or adjust funding based on the economy, and many schools are falling apart! What would keep teachers from leaving, maybe nothing any more! However, Defined Benefits would certainly make a difference to keep educators (firefighters, etc) longer than a year or two. 401K is not the magic bullet. We are training new hires and spending \$15,000-30,000 to train them up to standards then they leave the state! Do the right thing and veto proof Defined Benefits. Thank you.

Kathy Privratsky
7201 Montage Circle
Anchorage, Ak 99507

Doniece Gott

From: K Reynolds907 <kreynolds907@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 12:53 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Cc: Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson; Rep. Andy Josephson
Subject: HB 78 support

I'm asking you to support restoring a defined benefit pension for Alaska's public employees. The current defined contribution system makes it harder to recruit and retain public service workers. Leaving some employees exposed to market volatility as they near retirement.

A modern, well-managed pension provides predictable income, strengthens workforce stability, and reduces the high costs of turnover. Bringing back a defined benefit option would help Alaska stay competitive and ensure our public services remain strong.

Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you,
Kim Reynolds

Doniece Gott

From: Karen McBride <mcbride_karen@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 12:40 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB 78 Vote Yes

Dear members,

The state must do many things to improve the educational systems in this state - too long neglected and poor choices in the past have rendered our educational programs in critical need of life-support. One action is to vote yes on this bill to give teachers a retirement motivator to work in schools. It is beyond my imagination why anyone chooses to work in a public job that does not provide a pension or social security as a retirement plan. The current 401 K plan for the Anchorage educators is way far below what is in place for Tier 1 or Tier 2 retirees.

No pension, no social security - I would not be enticed to work in Anchorage. I would move as I know others have.

I am sure other public employees in the state are in a similar bad retirement situation.

Hard decisions I know fall on your shoulders.

) Vote yes on this bill.

) Put in place an income tax and let all earners contribute to the needs of the state.

From where I sit those are smart choices for now and the future, Karen McBride

Doniece Gott

From: LaVerne Robinson Kent <lavernerobinson@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 12:27 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Cc: Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Rep. Ted Eischeid
Subject: Support for the reinstatement of the Pension Retirement Plan

Good Afternoon,

My name is LaVerne Robinson Kent, and I have been an employee of the State of Alaska for more than 10 years. Retirement age for me and many others is fast approaching, and PERS alone is not sufficient for retirement. I believe that the State of Alaska employees need the security of a pension, not only to attract employees but to retain them. I respectfully urge you to continue fighting for the reinstatement of the pension plan. For employees like me, it is not simply a benefit—it is the difference between insecurity and the ability to retire with peace of mind.

Thank you for your continued advocacy and for considering my perspective.

Respectfully,

LaVerne Robinson Kent

--

Peace and Prosperity, L

Doniece Gott

From: Robert Gray <robproroofing@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 12:07 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Vote no on your defined benefits just pay attention to history and it cost us a fortune in the past and we cannot afford it in today's economy. Thank you.

Sent from my iPhone

Doniece Gott

From: Donald Trometter <dptrom@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 12:02 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB78

Hello Committee,

Please vote NO on HB78. Our state does not need the return of Defined benefits.

Sincerely,
Donald Trometter
North Pole



Virus-free. www.avast.com

Doniece Gott

From: Rita Trometter <drtrom@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 11:58 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB78

Hello Committee,

Please vote **NO** on HB78. Defined benefits is one reason our state is in a financial mess. We don't need to bring it back.

Kindly,
Rita Trometter
North Pole



Virus-free www.avast.com

Doniece Gott

From: Michael garhart <mgarhart20@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 1:40 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB78

I implore you to vote " NO " for this Bill ; We still owe way too much from when these were canceled in 2006 ; Twenty years and we still owe Billions !

Doniece Gott

From: janel dockendorf <dockendorfjanel@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 1:42 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Defined benefits

I vote NO on HB78

Doniece Gott

From: janel dockendorf <dockendorfjanel@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 1:43 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee

I want to vote NO to HB78 Defined benefits

Doniece Gott

From: Pamela Bickford <plbickford1@att.net>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 12:56 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB 78

The premium pension plan was unsustainable when the pipeline revenue had no limits, and returning to a failed plan is not reasonable or in the best interests of all Alaskans.

State employees are provided premium health care benefits, enjoy unionized labor protections, and are entitled to numerous considerations that private sector employees will never have in a competitive labor market.

I don't support HB 78, and oppose every reason my representative, Senator Giessel suggests that this bill should be passed.

Sent from my iPhone

Doniece Gott

From: Diane Jewkes <lennyjewkes@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 12:46 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB78

We oppose this bill. Do not pass

Diane or Lenny Jewkes