

Doniece Gott

From: Jennifer House [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 09, 2026 1:39 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB 78

Dear Madam/Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Jennifer House and I live in Fairbanks. I am writing to express my opposition to HB78. This is a huge step backwards for both our State and our State employees. A Defined Benefit retirement program creates a substantial financial burden for future generations of our State. There is no definitive evidence that returning to a defined benefit program would significantly improve employee recruitment and retention. There are many variables at play when someone decides to accept a position and remain with an employer. Better tracking of the "why" employees leave their positions or "why" applicants choose not to work for our State is required. If we know our current wage levels are not competitive, we should adjust them accordingly to ensure a stable workforce. That would be a far more acceptable measure than creating a retirement liability that our children would have to deal with in the future.

Considering the pro's and con's of defined benefit versus defined contribution retirement plans, I find it hard to understand why anyone would choose a defined benefit plan. A 401K provides unrivaled control, flexibility and portability. The employee has full control over the investments based on their personal risk tolerance. And if an employee has personal opposition to certain industries or funds, they can direct their retirement dollars elsewhere. With a pension you have no control over the investment strategy and you are limited to a fixed amount paid each month. With a 401k, if a financial need or emergency occurs you can access as much of your funds as you need at that time. With a 401k, if you die, your retirement funds are inherited by your spouse or family. With a pension - there is nothing left (unless you opt. to pay more for survivor benefits).

Perhaps the State should consider better tools for educating applicants on its defined contribution program. If an applicant is applying from another state where they were a public employee under a defined benefit program - they may not fully understand the benefits of defined contributions.

Thank you for your time and attention to my concerns.

Doniece Gott

From: Jeff Hoover <[REDACTED]@alaska.com>
Sent: Monday, March 09, 2026 11:08 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: State pension bill

To Senate Finance,

First, thank you for your service and for representing our great state!

I am writing to urge you to support House Bill 78's passage. Here's why:

- Pensions are crucial to recruiting and retaining qualified, competent state employees.
- Our public services are suffering due to understaffing from ongoing recruitment and retention issues—this incurs unexpected and unnecessary costs and consequences.
- From forced premium pay and federal fines to families going hungry, and in some cases even dying from lack of public services, one thing is clear: THE COST OF DOING NOTHING IS TOO HIGH.

Alaska must restore public pensions for public employees. It is not a luxury—it's a necessary, emergency response to Alaska's failing state services.

Alaska's communities, public employees, and your constituents are relying on you to make the right vote for Alaska's future. Please vote for HB 78 or the Senate equivalent legislation. Thank you

Jeff Hoover

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Juneau, Alaska 99801

Sent from my iPhone

Doniece Gott

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 09, 2026 10:10 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Make Alaska a Stronger State: YES on HB 78

Honorable Members of the Alaska Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you so much for the time and energy you have devoted to Alaskans by serving in the Legislature and in this committee in particular.

I am writing to urge you to support House Bill 78's passage. My husband and I are retired teachers and beneficiaries of the old Tier One retirement plan. We have remained in Alaska because we can afford to, thanks to the pensions we receive. We have worked and volunteered in the years since we retired and, thus, Alaska has benefited from our presence here.

I strongly urge you to support HB 78, the defined benefits bill for state employees. Here's why:

- Pensions are crucial to recruiting and retaining qualified, competent state employees.
- Our public services are suffering due to understaffing from ongoing recruitment and retention issues—this incurs unexpected and unnecessary costs and consequences.
- From forced premium pay and federal fines to families going hungry, and in some cases even dying from lack of public services, one thing is clear: THE COST OF DOING NOTHING IS TOO HIGH.

Alaska must restore public pensions for public employees. It is not a luxury—it's a necessary, emergency response to Alaska's failing state services.

Alaska's communities, public employees, and your constituents are relying on you to make the right vote for Alaska's future. Please vote for HB 78's passage!

Thank you for supporting teachers and other public employees!

Luann McVey

~~luannmvey@me.com~~

~~luannmvey@me.com~~

Douglas, Alaska 99824



Doniece Gott

From: Kristi Downing (she/her)
Sent: Saturday, March 07, 2026 5:44 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB 78

I am writing in support of HB 78. As a teacher in Alaska, I worry about how I will retire, especially as a Tier III teacher. I would like to continue to work and raise my family in Alaska, as I was raised here; however, I often contemplate leaving Alaska to teach in another state with better benefits and pay, per the cost of living.

HB 78 would give teachers a pension and a defined benefits plan, allowing us to plan for a better future here in Alaska.

Thank you,

--
Kristi Downing (she/her)

I acknowledge that I live on the unceded lands of the Tanana Khwt'ana, who are an active and integral part of the life and community here.

Doniece Gott

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 06, 2026 8:53 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support HB 78

Dear Legislators,

My name is Kevin Klott and I am writing in strong support of House Bill 78.

Public employees in Alaska deserve a fair retirement. HB 78 is an important step toward restoring that by creating a defined benefit pension plan for public employees. A pension provides guaranteed lifetime retirement income, greater financial security for workers and their families, and helps make public service a more stable and sustainable career.

This issue is not just about retirement. It is also about staffing. When Alaska cannot offer a strong and dependable retirement system, it becomes harder to recruit and retain the teachers, public safety workers, and other public employees our communities rely on every day. A pension would help make Alaska more competitive and help reduce turnover in critical public service jobs.

People who dedicate their careers to serving the public should be able to retire with dignity. They should not have to choose between serving their communities and having retirement security. HB 78 would support workers, strengthen families, and improve stability in public workplaces across Alaska.

Please support HB 78. Alaska needs pensions, and public employees deserve a retirement system that reflects the value of their service.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kevin Klott



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
Office of the Borough Manager
350 East Dahlia Avenue • Palmer, AK 99645
Phone (907) 861-8689 • Fax (907) 861-8669
Mike.Brown@matsu.gov

March 6, 2026

The Honorable Chuck Kopp
District 10
House Majority Leader

Via email: Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov

RE: **House Bill 78 Comments**

Dear Representative Kopp:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on **House Bill 78 (HB 78)**, which proposes reestablishing a defined benefit retirement plan for public employees, teachers, and public safety workers in Alaska. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough (Borough) position on HB 78 aligns with our State Legislative priority as follows: the Assembly opposes any bills amending the State Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) plan design changes unless such bills contain a provision that changes only apply to participating municipalities if the municipalities affirmatively elect to allow the changes to apply to their municipal employees. The Borough has a strong interest in understanding the fiscal risks associated with a return to a defined benefit structure. We respectfully offer the following for your consideration.

HB 78 may provide several workforce-related advantages. A defined benefit plan can be a meaningful tool for recruitment and retention, particularly in hard-to-fill positions. We recognize this is a factor across Alaska, but it is not a significant issue in the Mat-Su Borough. Borough wide workforce data reflects increasing stability in recruitment and retention. While turnover was higher from 2020 - 2024, the Borough sustained staffing growth and, in 2025, experienced a notable decline in separations alongside continued hiring, indicating improved retention and a more balanced, stable workforce. The Borough's average turnover remains consistent with or below state and local government separation rates reported through the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This suggests the Borough is in a stable and competitive position relative to public sector workforce trends.

Although employer contribution caps remain in place for local governments, providing a degree of predictability at the local level, the State, when faced with financial shortfalls, has elected to short-fund agreed-upon programs such as school bond debt reimbursement previously, leaving the Borough to make up the difference. This has cost local taxpayers millions of dollars over the past several years. What prevents this same thing from occurring with a defined benefit program, where costs will escalate?

The Borough remains **cautious regarding long-term cost impacts**, particularly for the State of Alaska and, indirectly, for local governments. Increased State expenditures can still affect municipalities through broader budget pressures, reduced State assistance, or competition for limited public resources. From a local government perspective, these indirect impacts warrant careful consideration.

The Borough also recognizes that projected savings from improved retention are not guaranteed and are difficult to quantify. The Borough recognizes the importance of maintaining a stable and qualified public workforce. At the

same time, we believe it is prudent to proceed thoughtfully, with full awareness of the long-term fiscal risks associated with defined benefit plans and the potential implications for both the State and local governments.

For these reasons, the Borough cannot support HB 78 without a local opt-in provision, while respectfully encouraging continued scrutiny of long-term costs and ongoing safeguards to protect public employers and taxpayers. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued work on issues affecting Alaska's public employees and communities.

Sincerely,
**Michael
Brown**
Michael Brown
Borough Manager

Digitally signed by
Michael Brown
Date: 2026.03.06
09:28:06 -09'00'

cc: Mayor Edna DeVries
Mat-Su Valley Delegation
Mr. John Harris
Mr. Nils Andreassen

COUNCIL ANNETTE ISLANDS RESERVE METLAKATLA INDIAN COMMUNITY

ALBERT G. SMITH, MAYOR
JUDITH A. EATON, EXECUTIVE TRIBAL SECRETARY
DARCY BOOTH, TREASURER

RESOLUTION #26 - 20

POST OFFICE BOX 8
METLAKATLA, ALASKA 99926
PHONE (907) 886-4441
FAX (907) 886-7997

ESTABLISHED 1887
METLAKATLA INDIAN COMMUNITY

BY THE COUNCIL/EXECUTIVES ANNETTE ISLANDS RESERVE

Support for House Bill 78

WHEREAS, the Council of the Annette Islands Reserve (the "Council") is the governing body of the Metlakatla Indian Community, Annette Islands Reserve, Alaska, by the authority of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Metlakatla Indian Community approved on August 23, 1944, by the Secretary of the Interior (Constitution); and

WHEREAS, the Metlakatla Indian Community (the "Community") is a federally recognized Indian Tribe, organized pursuant to the provisions of Section 16, of the Federal Reorganization Act. 25 USC, subsection 476; and

WHEREAS, the Community is governed by its Council, which is responsible for the welfare of the Annette Islands Reserve in all respects; and

WHEREAS, despite the fact the Community is a sovereign nation whose government employees do not participate in the State of Alaska's retirement system, the integrity of the State of Alaska retirement impacts the Community through direct participation of some of its members, and by providing adequate benefits to employees of several State agencies that operate services that are important to the health, safety, and welfare of the Community and its members; and

WHEREAS, such services include the Alaska State Troopers, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (which provides vital transportation services to the Community by way of the Alaska Marine Highway System), and the Office of Children's Services; and

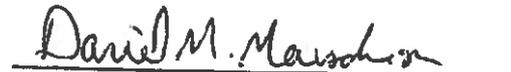
WHEREAS, Council recognizes that the strength of those critical services depends on continuity and quality of employees, which is bolstered by a strong benefits package, including retirement benefits.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council resolves as follows: Council fully supports the goal of HB 78 and the approach taken towards that goal and urges the Alaska Senate Finance Committee to advance the bill through Committee and on to ultimate consideration and passage by the Alaska Legislature.

Dated this 3rd day of March, 2026 at Metlakatla, Alaska
METLAKATLA INDIAN COMMUNITY

ATTEST:


Judith A. Eaton, Executive Tribal Secretary


Daniel M. Marsden, Sr., Acting Mayor

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted at a Special Tribal Council meeting held on 3rd day of March, 2026 at which a quorum was present, by a vote of 7 FOR, -0- AGAINST, and -0- ABSTAINING, the Mayor being authorized to sign said resolution.


Judith A. Eaton, Executive Tribal Secretary

Kathryn Miller

Juneau, AK 99801

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Alaska State Legislature
120 4th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: House Bill 78 - Retirement Security for Alaska's Public Servants

Dear Members of the Legislature and Staff,

I am writing in support of House Bill 78. I am a lifelong Alaskan and a former Tier IV State of Alaska (SOA) employee. I began working for the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) as a deck cadet in 2013 while attending the United States Merchant Marine Academy. Upon graduating in 2014, I returned to Alaska and was hired as a Third Officer and sailed as a Third, Second, and Chief Officer until my resignation in 2022. If I had been enrolled in a defined benefit plan as opposed to a defined contribution plan, I would have been strongly disincentivized from resigning after nine years of service and would likely have remained an AMHS employee until retirement age. Of course, there were additional considerations, including a lack of adequate maternity leave for vessel employees, but my decision to resign was made far easier by the structure of my retirement and healthcare benefits. It is my personal opinion that this has been the case for many resigning Tier IV employees across various departments throughout the State.

For those who are unfamiliar with the details of a Tier IV retirement, allow me to explain:

When I was considering resigning in 2022 to pursue employment elsewhere in the maritime industry, I looked into what exactly I would be leaving behind. At that time, as a Tier IV employee who had been hired by the State at age 21, if I had continued working for the State for 30 years and retired at age 51, my benefits would have been remarkably inadequate. I would have no retirement income unless I had been voluntarily contributing to my Deferred Compensation Plan, because SBS and PERS/DCR accounts are not accessible until age 59 1/2 (in 2022—this age could increase by 2044), and the only healthcare benefit 30 years of service provides is the opportunity to enroll in and pay the full monthly premium for a DCR AlaskaCare Health Plan (which, in 2022, had a \$2,718.30 monthly medical premium for a retiree and family, plus a \$190.74 monthly dental/vision/audio premium for a retiree and family) and access to a Health Reimbursement Account (HRA).

This HRA was opened on my behalf when I was hired in 2014 but is not an investment account, simply a savings account. At the time of my 2022 resignation, my HRA had a balance of \$18,224.01. It was funded at a rate of 3% of the average Tier IV SOA employee's salary annually. After 30 years of service, its balance would be around \$80,000, maybe more if average wages increase. It can be used to reimburse premiums and certain prescription drug expenses, but

not for medical expenses. If I were to retire after 30 years of service, that \$80,000 (using 2022 premiums—not 2044 ones, which will likely have increased) would last me around two years, but in no case more than three years if I used the funds to pay my monthly premiums in full. At that point, I would be completely without retirement income or healthcare support after a 30-year career with the State.

At Medicare age (likely 67 or 70 by the time Tier IV retires), the costs of the plans decrease and they become secondary to Medicare. Monthly costs reduce to \$641.58 (retiree with 30 years of service is responsible for 10% of this premium) for medical and \$133.62 (retiree with 30 years of service is responsible for 100% of this premium) for a retiree and spouse in 2022. Nothing less than 30 years of service provides access to that HRA or the AlaskaCare plan before Medicare age. Ten years of service provides access to both at Medicare age, but, of course, the HRA likely has a balance of only around \$25,000. If I were to retire after 30 years and ration my HRA funds until Medicare age, I would only be able to decrease my \$2,909.04 (again, this will increase) monthly healthcare premium by \$479. Tier IV also does not contribute to Social Security and therefore cannot draw upon it in retirement—the same as earlier Tiers.

I don't know the exact details of the other Tiers' post-retirement healthcare, but I know Tier I retirees don't pay any premiums, some Tier II and III retirees don't pay any premiums, and the 2022 monthly premiums for Tier II/III without State-paid healthcare were over \$1,000 cheaper.

In addition, as a Tier IV employee, I took home less pay every month in the years I was working for the State because I was funding my retirement with up to 39% (6.13% to SBS, 8% to PERS/DCR, and up to 25% to maximize Deferred Compensation contributions in order to have some income between retirement and age 59 1/2) of my income each month. Defined benefit employees currently contribute 6.75% and are eligible for early or normal retirement at age 50, 55, or 60, depending on Tier, or **at any age** after 30 years of service. In addition, public safety employees are eligible for retirement at 20 or 25 years of service, depending on Tier. I won't suggest AMHS vessel employees are equivalent to first responders, but they do perform all firefighting, public safety, and emergency medical response for the State at sea. (This always struck me as an overlooked reality, particularly as I was performing live firefighting training inside actively burning structures and/or trying to prepare my crew for an active shooter response at sea with zero law enforcement presence aboard the vessel.)

All this being said, I understand we are living in different times than when Tier I was created. People live longer, and the State's dependency on oil revenue has left us in a poor financial position from which to fund public employee benefit packages. It doesn't help that retirement and benefits packages are difficult to understand in detail and are often not of interest to those who aren't enrolled in them. Unfortunately, I think this has resulted in the misconception that younger employees are disloyal or noncommittal members of the workforce. In my experience, this couldn't be further from the truth. The onus simply lies with the employer to demonstrate loyalty first—through rewards, guarantees, defined benefits—and the young employee will follow suit. For example, as a service academy graduate, I owed an eight-year service obligation to the U.S. Navy Reserve. I have so far exceeded my obligation with 12 total years of service, and I intend to continue serving in part because the U.S. Navy provides retirement benefits after 20 years of service. Many of my millennial service academy classmates have made the same

calculation, and we continue to serve beyond our obligation despite a myriad of annual requirements—active-duty service, physical exams, fitness standards, security clearances, etc.

When employers communicate a lack of commitment to the employee—market-based retirement income, disregard of years of service, healthcare plans that must be purchased via ever-increasing monthly premiums—the employee responds in kind. This has resulted in a shift toward ruthless individualism across our economy and toward vacant positions, constant turnover, excessive training/overtime costs, and a steady exodus of families across Alaska. If our would-be public servants are interested in an employment package with poor retirement and healthcare benefits, there are many private companies that specialize in those while paying a higher wage.

In conclusion, I urge the entire Legislature to familiarize themselves with the details of our current retirement and benefits packages and examine the long-term workforce consequences of their structure. HB 78 proposes a strong reward system that would encourage hiring and discourage resignation of current and future employees. The return to retirement **at any age** with 30 years of service is a long-overdue correction and particularly attractive to recent college graduates, who are otherwise penalized for starting and staying with the State from a young age. Personally, I would also like to see the HRA funds stored in a low-risk investment portfolio, a money-market fund, or at least a high-yield savings account. I also think the retiree should have greater latitude over where they are spent—an Affordable Care Act plan (especially if the retiree qualifies for a subsidy) or union plan (my Masters, Mates & Pilots family health plan monthly premium was only about \$1,300 in 2022) would almost certainly come with a lower premium than the DCR AlaskaCare plan and, in some cases, provide access to a Health Savings Account. The retiree could then make his or her HRA funds last a lot longer. Also, I would like to see AMHS vessel employees qualify for retirement after fewer than 30 years of service, given their public safety responsibilities.

I respectfully urge you to support HB 78. Thank you for your service to our State and for your thoughtful consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,
Kathryn Miller

Source: <https://drb.alaska.gov/employee/dcrplan.html#healthbenefits>

Doniece Gott

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 06, 2026 1:19 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Public Testimony Strongly Supporting HB 78 – Restore Alaska’s Public Pension

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Carlos Xavier Alfaro, and I am writing to strongly support HB 78, legislation to restore a defined benefit pension for Alaska’s public employees.

For nearly two decades, Alaska has been the only state in the nation without a defined benefit pension system for public employees. The consequences of that decision have been clear and costly. Our state has faced persistent recruitment and retention problems across critical sectors, including education, public safety, and essential government services. Positions remain unfilled, experienced employees leave for other states, and the burden on those who remain continues to grow.

Public employees dedicate their careers to serving Alaskans and keeping our communities functioning. They deserve a retirement system that reflects the value of their work and encourages them to build their futures here in Alaska rather than seeking stability elsewhere.

HB 78 represents an opportunity to correct a policy mistake that has negatively impacted our workforce and the services our residents depend on. Restoring a defined benefit pension will strengthen Alaska’s ability to recruit qualified professionals, retain experienced employees, and stabilize the institutions that support our communities.

A strong retirement system is not just about benefits for workers; it is about building a stable, reliable workforce that ensures the long-term health and functionality of our state government.

I respectfully urge the Senate Finance Committee to advance HB 78 and move it forward for a full vote. Alaska’s future workforce stability depends on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Carlos Xavier Alfaro
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [Grace Ervine](#)
To: [Julia OConnor](#)
Subject: FW: Bring back defined benefit pensions
Date: Monday, March 2, 2026 9:00:05 AM

-----Original Message-----

From: House Judiciary <House.Judiciary@akleg.gov>
Sent: Sunday, March 1, 2026 7:37 PM
To: Grace Ervine <Grace.Ervine@akleg.gov>
Subject: FW: Bring back defined benefit pensions

This seems like it might have been meant for your office.

Best,

Dylan Hitchcock-Lopez
Office of Representative Andrew Gray
House Judiciary Committee Aide
(907) 465-2840

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 28, 2026 5:38 PM
To: House Judiciary <House.Judiciary@akleg.gov>
Subject: Bring back defined benefit pensions

Yes, Alaska swallowed the nonsense, hook, line, and sinker, and, to put the best face on it, entered into a lengthy experiment which has now proved that absent an adequate benefit package including health coverage and a defined benefit pension, Alaska simply can't attract and retain state, municipal, or school employees.

Alaskan CAN afford to invest in Alaskans. We can't afford to subsidize BigOil or other extraction industries, and we can't afford to engage in the ideological nonsense pandered by the Governor.

It's high time we ceased spending our funds obstructing access to data, obscuring the facts, misrepresenting the State's conduct, and funding political litigation.

Marc Grober, Esq. Ret.
[REDACTED]
Anchorage, AK 99504