

February 1, 2026

Patrick Michael O'Connor

To:

Rep. Chuck Kopp

120 4th Street

Juneau AK 99801

Dear Rep. Kopp,

My name is Patrick O'Connor, and I am writing on behalf of several injured first responders who worked for the State of Alaska and the Municipality of Anchorage. I appreciate your re-visiting the lack of disability and medical provisions offered by the state for those who have been injured in the line of duty, serving and protecting the citizens of Alaska. I have previously shared my experiences with you as far as how I was injured and the difficulty in sustaining a quality of life after a career ending injury.

I wanted to share a few thoughts and suggestions on how the State of Alaska can better serve those who served the state and your constituents. Currently the disability benefit is calculated at 40% of the previous 12 months of employment before separation of service. This calculation is low compared to other states' disability programs and for many who are injured they are often on FMLA and not being compensated at the rate when they were injured. A suggestion would be to incorporate a "high three" average with a disability payment of 75% allowing the injured worker to be able to afford medical insurance that is not provided upon medical separation.

Another challenge that injured workers face is the annual re-certification process that is required to maintain disability from the state. We believe this requirement should be removed as it produces undo stress, anxiety, and the inability to plan for a stable financial future. Injured workers have been denied loans due to the lack of being able to demonstrate consistent or guaranteed income with how the state currently has it set up. For a comparison the City of Phoenix offers injured employees 50% of their "high three" before date of injury, tax free for life. They also do not require an annual re-certification for the disability benefit.

I did not want to present this letter without providing potential solutions that I am happy to discuss further.

- 1) 75% disability benefit based on a “high three” year average for life
- 2) 50% disability benefit based on “high three” years for life with similar medical coverage as date of injury for injured employee, spouse, and dependents

These two suggested options also would include that the annual re-certification be eliminated.

I am happy to have any further conversations about this matter.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'pmo', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patrick Michael O'Connor