

Konrad Jackson

From: Anna Bosin <annabosin@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:47 AM
To: House Labor and Commerce; Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: I support Sen Bill 88: Return to Defined Benefits options

I fully support reinstituting the option for public employees to opt into defined benefits. This will also be a welcome recruitment incentive for new hires. The workforce is STRUGGLING right now- One example is seeing City of Anchorage privatize public responsibilities (snow plowing, maintenance, finance, , and that impacts the State too by pulling from our "island of workers" up here in AK. snow plow operators are one glaring example of positions the state cannot keep filled because the pay AND benefits are not competitive. People want to enter the trades and work for their communities, but they need to be properly VALUED and that happens through a comprehensive benefits package. Defined benefits will offer a long-game investment into the workforce with a joint commitment from the employee to being vested.

If Alaska wants a 21st century economy, you must support the employees who directly make that happen: Teachers, First Responders, Public Works Operators.

The House Education Committee just met this AM. Reps Prax and McCay suggested that teachers aren't teaching students how to read, WITHOUT facts BTW. That is an outrageous claim that shows NO value towards teachers or school district employees. You have the power to set the record straight by passing Sen. Bill 88 and valuing the hard work and skilled labor in our schools.

Alaska is already a "training ground" for the trades and skilled labor such as police and fire and construction industry. But in order to RETAIN the newly skilled workforce, we need to offer competitive benefits. Otherwise we will continue to see high turnover in police and fire which costs the state more every year. This is a long game and you can stop the bleeding!

please pass Sen 88 and convince your colleagues across the isle to support this.
Anna Bosin
Anchorage Resident

Konrad Jackson

From: Christopher Brown <fvluckystrike@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 27, 2023 12:59 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: SB 88 - Retirement Options - Defined Benefit

Greetings,

I am writing today in support of SB 88, and specifically a return to some sort of defined benefit retirement plan for teachers and public employees. While I am writing to you as a concerned constituent (I have three kids in or soon to be in our public schools), it is my experience as an educator that affords me relevant insight.

I began my teaching career here in Alaska over 20 years ago, after a couple of years working in the lower 48. During that time, there have been many times that I have contemplated (and even pursued) a career change, but it was my defined benefit retirement plan that brought me back to the profession time and time again.

It first happened only four years into my teaching career (when I began fishing in the summer) that I contemplated not teaching anymore, but the idea that I could teach a few more years and get vested in a retirement system was too enticing.

The next "hook" came a few years after that. I had been commercial fishing and teaching for a few years and had achieved my goal of being vested in the state, so I contemplated quitting teaching and focusing primarily on my "summer job." At that point, life happened and I needed the reliable income of a teaching job to support my family. So I signed a contract again and returned to the classroom. Then next time I looked up, 20 years of service was only a short few years off, and now that we're here, I might as well go 25. That is how the system should work.

Unfortunately, as an administrator the last eight years (a position I came to somewhat reluctantly), I have noticed a change. We now have "tourist teachers," who come up for their Alaska experience and leave after five or so years, never to return. At the same time, during hiring season, we are faced with a shortage of viable candidates for open positions. It is my hope that the legislature will step up and reinstate a defined benefit retirement system, and one that incentivizes long term engagement with our communities and our kids.

Thank you for all that you do.

Christopher Brown
Homer, AK 99603

Konrad Jackson

From: 1danconetta@gmail.com
Sent: Monday, March 20, 2023 1:58 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Senate Bill 88

Dear Committee,

My name is Daniel Conetta, from Kenai Alaska. I am a retired public employee with 29 years of service with the Kenai Peninsula Borough, Planning Department, Land Management Division. I urge you to support Senate Bill 88. I believe defined benefits will provide an incentive to retain quality public employees.

Thank you for your consideration

Dan Conetta

Konrad Jackson

From: Darwin Feakes <d2darwin@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 24, 2023 3:30 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: SB 88

I urge you to look closely at this Bill. Those of us who work in the state public sector under the defined contribution have no idea what our retirement will look like no way to plan or budget as we do not know what the fund will be when we retire in 5 years 10 years or 30 years. If the stock market was to crash my retirement would be gone. My personal 401k gone. All my hard work for the state. I will be coming to you for welfare and food stamps. Where is the fairness in that?

This system is also making it hard to find people who want to work in some of the roughest conditions with no retirement system they can depend on in one of the most expensive places to live.

Again I urge you to pass this piece of legislation this year.

Darwin Feakes
Haines, Alaska

Konrad Jackson

From: schaff.david@gmail.com
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:40 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Testimony in support of SB 88

My name is David Schaff and my testimony in support of SB 88 is mine and not that of any one I represent or have represented. I have family who have lived here in Alaska since 1959. My uncle was Dean of Alaska Methodist University (Now Pacific University) and served as the State Geologist for many years. I am recently retired from the National Labor Relations Board where I served as its sole Alaska based attorney since 2001. I can now, as a retiree, devote more of my time to the affairs of the State that I love.

Some of those who testified before this committee on SB 88 in the last few days are not in support of the bill and reason that State teacher defined pensions would cost the State too much money. Let me put this bill within a wider context that responds to these concerns.

Of all the State's natural resources, oil produces the most revenue for the State. With our focus so squarely on oil, we lost sight of the financial loss we have suffered when we gifted that industry with a reduced percentage of royalties and production taxes they are required to remit to the State. That loss of revenue negatively affected our State's ability to budget for the greater needs of our people. The oil industry still benefits from this reduction as they proceed to reduce the number of jobs they once offered due to automation. At this point, whether the legislature changes the percentages to increase revenue, we need to diversify the natural resource industries in Alaska so that we can receive new revenue sources that are not bound to the fate of one industry.

New revenue sources are possible but only if our community can attract new and diverse industries. With our schools ranked already at the bottom of the 50 states, how does the State expect to attract any industry to locate here? Any industry that would transfer its operations to Alaska will expect to have in place in the community competent schools that graduate qualified potential workers positioned to fill the new jobs such industries could offer. But the reality is we are losing our ability to graduate such talented workers as we are losing the quality teachers that can educate them.

If we want to keep our youth in Alaska, they must have the opportunity to work in the land in which they grew up. If we do not improve the rank of our schools, there will be no such jobs to keep them here. If we continue to cut services instead of investing in our community, we will continue to negatively impact the quality of life in Alaska which will result not only in the loss of teachers and other public employees, but the loss of families leaving the state as they can no longer suffer the loss of services that provided the wealth of Alaska available to them to share.

When we refuse to invest in our community and especially in our schools and teachers, we risk plummeting down an economic spiral that leaves us suffering the fate of a failed state. If we cannot offer our teachers competitive benefits like a defined pension, we cannot provide a quality education to our own population, and if we cannot graduate competent and skilled students, we cannot expect to attract new industries to Alaska. It's that simple. So why should we, as some have testified, operate the State budget as if it were a home checkbook where you pay only for what you have in the bank, when businesses do not operate that way? Businesses borrow so they can invest and have a return on that investment. Why should the State not invest in the future of its people? If we do not invest in our community, why should we expect new industries to invest in our community? Without new revenue we are headed for a broken state where more and more of our neighbors leave whether they be public workers with better offers elsewhere or our youth looking for jobs they can secure in the lower 48 or our families who follow their children to their new jobs no longer finding the community vibrant and a worthwhile place to live. Failing to invest in our community will further reduce our revenue as businesses start to shut down because their customers have left the State. The future of our State depends on smart decisions being fashioned by the legislature that can conceive of the community we all want and the means to

reach it. The objection that that all takes time merely means we must start right now, and SB 88 is the least that can be done to improve our state.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.

David Schaff
7010 E. 140th Ave.
Anchorage, AK 99516
907-336-4475

Konrad Jackson

From: Drew von Lindern <drewvonlindern@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 9:09 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Support for SB 88 - Reinstating the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan

To Whom it may Concern:

I have been employed with the State of Alaska for 11 years, and I take pride in my civil service and doing my part to help provide for the well-being of the public. I would also like to make the disclaimer that, though I am an SOA employee, I am writing on my own behalf and on my own time. I have had the opportunity to work with many great people during my time with SOA, from all walks of life and at all different points in their careers. It's clear after discussing the different levels of benefits amongst the tiers, that tier IV employees are sorely missing out by having a defined contribution system as opposed to a defined benefit (pension) system, especially in times where volatile stock fluctuations are a more regular occurrence. I am greatly in favor of SB 88, especially because it simply affords the opportunity for tier IV employees to make a choice regarding how they'd like to approach their retirement plan. If some employees want to stick with the defined contribution plan, they can under the bill, but it also allows employees like myself the opportunity to join the defined benefit plan. Unlike other potential bills and house resolutions that only open the option to certain sectors, SB 88 opens the opportunity to all SOA employees, regardless of what Department, Section, or Program they belong to. I think that is the best approach because every single SOA employee fills a vital role and we're all working hard for the betterment of the public; we're all public servants and take pride in our service to Alaska. I think this would go a long way toward the longstanding recruitment and retention problems we've seen throughout the SOA system as well, as Alaska is one of the few government agencies that does not provide a pension option to employees - something that I guarantee is weighed heavily by prospective employees who may have options in locations with lower cost of living, better housing availability, etc.

I greatly appreciate the work you do and thank you for doing everything you can to make sure SB 88 is passed and a defined benefit option is made available to all SOA employees. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Drew von Lindern

Konrad Jackson

From: Eileen Mock <eileenmock@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 2:52 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: The return to a defined benefit

Hello Labor & Commerce Committee,

I would like to provide my personal story in regards to retirement and the lack of a defined benefit.

I was hired by the Delta Greely School District in September of 2007. I came in with six years of teaching experience and then proceeded to teach the next 14 years as a K-1 teacher and school librarian. I loved teaching and was even named teacher of the year for the 2015-2016 school year. After 14 years in Alaska education, I finally made a VERY tough decision to leave the education field. Looking at my teacher retirement and the lack of paying into social security I knew that if I was to stay I would never be able to retire. I am not getting any younger! I accepted a position in the contracting world where a 401K is offered and I can earn social security credits in the hopes that one day I would be able to retire.

There is not a day goes by that I do not miss the kids, my colleagues and knowing I was making a difference but due to the lack of a defined benefit, I felt I had no other choice. I know there are others out there like me who struggle with do I stay or do I go, unfortunately most are going. The state has to return to a defined benefit retirement system in order to retain teachers.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Eileen Mock
Former Educator
(907)750-1009

Konrad Jackson

From: Elijah Deatherage <crazyfeet13@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 10:55 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Senate bill 88

To the Alaska State Senate, and any others it may concern,

I have been a full-time firefighter/EMT for seven years. In that time we have had to hire seventeen new full-time personnel, on top of that, we currently have three unfilled positions. Out of twenty two full-time positions, ONLY NINE are filled with personnel that have more than THREE years of experience.

The driving motivator to begin a career in this field, for me and most others, is to serve our communities and to help those experiencing an emergency, but each person has to decide what is best for their future and the future of their families. Sadly, it has become clear that a long term career in this profession is not the answer for most.

I know that returning to a pension system will not be the answer to every problem effecting personnel retention, but I believe that it was a significant factor for many of my former coworkers and crewmembers. I can only attest to my own experience in my department, but it seems that my experience is not unique, based on conversations I have had with my fellow firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics from other fire departments.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Eli Deatherage
Captain/AEMT

Konrad Jackson

From: PSD Superintendent <supt@pcsd.us>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 2:36 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Support for SB 88

Chair Bjorkman and Members of the Labor and Commerce Committee,

My name is Erica Kludt-Painter and I am the Superintendent of the Petersburg School District. I am also a proud parent of two Petersburg High School graduates, and have served the Petersburg School District as a principal and superintendent since 2001. Thank *you* for your continued work on behalf of Alaska's students.

I am writing today in support of SB 88 and to express my support for a change in the State of Alaska Teacher Retirement System. I am troubled by the current state of affairs in our education system, which is not only failing to attract highly qualified teachers for long term service but also failing to retain them. Moreover, the state's education budget has been unstable for years, resulting in less than optimal resources and opportunities for our children.

As a member of the Petersburg School District for 21 years, I have seen firsthand the challenges facing our education system, particularly in attracting and retaining high-quality teachers. Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the future of our children, and it is imperative that we provide them with the support and resources necessary to succeed. Unfortunately, the current retirement system in Alaska is not competitive with other states, and this, in addition to lower wages and high cost of living, has led to an exodus of experienced teachers who have decided to seek employment and full retirement elsewhere.

As you are aware, the State of Alaska has a history of recruiting teachers from other states who bring valuable skills and experience to our schools. However, we are no longer able to attract these long term highly qualified teachers because of the lack of a competitive retirement plan. This not only impacts the quality of education our children receive but also hampers the state's ability to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers.

I urge you to take the necessary steps to reform the current retirement system for teachers in Alaska. By doing so, you will not only help to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers but also provide a better future for our children. Our state's education system cannot afford to fall behind, and we must take action to ensure that our teachers are supported and empowered to provide the best possible education to our children.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

Erica Kludt-Painter

MISSION: Petersburg Schools will advocate for continuous growth, promote a healthy environment, and provide diverse educational opportunities where all students achieve.

Erica Kludt-Painter
Superintendent
Petersburg School District
P.O. Box 289
Petersburg, AK 99833

Phone and Fax: 1-877-526-7656

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Konrad Jackson

From: Houska_Thomas <Houska_Thomas@asdk12.org>
Sent: Monday, March 27, 2023 2:20 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: SB 88

Good Afternoon,

Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony, Senators.

I am a 4th year teacher in the Anchorage School District. I have many friends who have recently left the profession due to lack of financial security and lack of support for teachers in general. I am on the fence of continuing with education and switching careers. It grieves me to consider leaving teaching, as a 26-year-old teacher that loves working with young students, but I need to consider my financial future and ability to raise a family.

Passing SB 88 would be a step in the right direction of retaining teachers in Alaska.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Thomas Houska
IGNITE Instructor
Houska_Thomas@asdk12.org
"Love the life you live. Live the life you love"-BM

Konrad Jackson

From: Ilana Kerschbaum <ilanakersch@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 24, 2023 8:20 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Senate bill 88

I am writing today in support of senate bill 88. I honestly don't have words to express what makes sense anymore in public education as a public educator. I am fortunate to be finishing up 27th year as a teacher in both the great states of Colorado and Alaska. But without the benefits of a defined benefits system from my previous district and tier 2 in this district and a hard earned, income that I can live on and contribute to a dual income family, I would not continue teaching. As many of my wry talented colleagues in all 3 tiers are leaving after this year. Not because they are ready to leave, not because they want to, but because without the defined benefit, and all else they are putting up with, they are just done. If those in tier 3, at least had a defined benefit, would they stay, maybe. But, they certainly won't and it is a reason to go to another state. We are in a crisis and to not have a defined benefit in Alaska, you will see more of us, who just can't take it, in tier 3, who can get just another job. They are at their breaking point. Why would any new teachers come?

Please, do at least this one right thing for the new educators and retroactively. We are barely hanging on in the schools. We love our kids. It is not the parents. It is not the kids. It is not most of the administrators. It is our broken system like the BSA, the over testing, the lack of Retirement in place.

Sincerely, Ilana Kerschbaum
Born in Anchorage, Alaska
27 year public Educator

Sent from my iPad

Konrad Jackson

From: Irene Bortnick <ibortnick@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 1:26 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: support for SB 88--retirement systems/defined benefit option

My name is Irene Bortnick. I live in Anchorage and am a retired Anchorage School District employee. I am writing in support of SB 88.

My husband and I were fortunate to get hired at Tier 2 so that we now receive a monthly pension. Without that, we would not be able to afford to continue to live in the state that has been our home for almost 40 years.

I was also fortunate during my 20-year tenure, to work as a mentor to a number of new teachers through the district mentorship program. That program is not cheap but it is a very worthwhile investment. That is, it is a worthwhile investment if the mentee stays on in the district.

However, without the incentive of a defined benefit/retirement option, many new teachers leave after a few years.

We have heard over and over from schools across the state that they cannot fill all the open positions. There are also not enough substitute teachers as many are signing on for long-term positions to fill those spots. Not all substitutes are trained teachers and they may lack classroom experience, which means that students in those classrooms may not be getting a quality education. It is crucial that every child is taught by trained teachers.

When teachers, and other public service employees leave the state, there is a ripple effect that is felt across the economy.

Please pass SB 88.

Konrad Jackson

From: Jennifer Cole <thesaltymermaidak@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 24, 2023 12:07 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Defined Benefits testimony

Good Afternoon,

My name is Jennifer Cole and I am giving my personal testimony on my own behalf. I am writing to you today to show my concerns for Senate Bill 88 and ask a few questions for you. I am a current employee of the state of Alaska. I am a tier 4 employee and have worked for both the Department of Health and Department of Transportation (AMHS) during my residency in the state of Alaska.

I am appalled to learn that there is even a debate on giving a decent option for retirement for State of Alaska employees.

I wanted to give my opinion on a few points.

I would like to address the concern of "We already have a deficit for a previous defined benefit program that didn't work" That is alarming that this is a fact,

I ask then, Why hasn't this been dealt with? Why hasn't the model been perfected and brought back to the table? Why haven't you researched other models of defined benefits? Is it because the money you strip from your workers has given you the opportunity to spend elsewhere and you have become comfortable with that? Or because we have forgotten? I am saddened to see some of the things on the calendar that is being introduced. Some really good points, and some that I end up scratching my head because I cannot believe why the priorities are not in order!

More importantly why eliminate hundreds of state jobs and let your locals go, then turn around when you are in a pinch and outsource 80 positions to a company down south to answer phones the very same positions you got rid of for budgetary reasons, for our PUBLIC assistance backlog mess? Why not employ people here, so their money stays here?

You ask about how we can afford to do this? There are ways that are staring us in the face. CUT THE OIL ROYALTIES!! this is insane! We don't need to ask companies to stay anymore, we need to sell, and they need to buy!

This burden of a deficit should not be on the shoulders of your state employees. This is a financial budgetary issue; we are not indentured servants who are to be forced to payback an ill managed budget and spending catastrophe from years ago.

We need a dignified means of retirement.

No retirement means more state employees on state assistance. Which is more costly? Medicaid, APA, Senior Benefits, Heating assistance programs, food banks, homeless shelters? State funded Hospitals and clinics?

You take the means for people to pay for their selves in their older years, you will see an influx of people on state assistance.

NO DEFINED BENEFITS means- loss of personnel, which means loss of coverage for vital positions and services, which means loss of control over emergency situations, which means lawsuits which means snowball effect draining Alaska's budgets.

We are already seeing this with the DPA backlog and the Federal govt fines that we are forced to pay due to being delayed. Please research this and report to the public on what is being spent on these fines!! and let the public know what is happening.

Please understand that the defined benefit can't solve everything, for the sake of the argument that was mentioned this week in testimony, some folks say I was able to pay for retirement without a defined benefit they should be able to as well.... yes, but times are different, cost of living is up, cost of food, cost of fuel, cost of goods and services, prescription medications etc.

It is sad when a person who works for the very office of public assistance is on SNAP and Medicaid themselves standing in line for a food box or rent assistance at the Salvation Army because their pay doesn't cover their housing or food. How are they going to make it for retirement if they can't even afford to save now?

No benefits, no teachers, no Fire Department, no emergency personnel, no caregivers for our elderly or disabled. understaffed, underpaid, undereducated is dangerous.

Give us a reason to invest here, to raise our kids, and keep our families and neighbors here for a long time. Work on this please all aspects, this effects far more than you can comprehend.

My daughter is currently down south earning her medical degree. She has plans to return to Alaska and provide her skills to our small island community. If I cannot retire here, she will not return, her income from being a skilled surgeon will not stay, her family, her property taxes, her kids won't get funding for the schools if they are attending. It's a ripple effect.

We need this defined benefit, but we also need a way to contribute to... FUND THE GEOGRAPHICAL SURVEY and PAY DIFFERENTIAL!!! NO UPDATE SINCE 2009 is laughable, disgraceful, sickening. What is going on in our state government for this to be skipped?

RENT is over 2k for a 3-bed apt with no utilities and that is if there is an apt available, the Coastguard shoots up the rental prices and so does the seasonal employees that are contracted from down south in the summer.

NO HOUSING, NO RETIREMENT, NO LIVABLE WAGES? Why even bother to stay is a question on everyone's minds. Defined benefit is an awesome step in the right direction.

My daughter has a PRE-MED t-shirt that reads, "Be nice to me, I might be your doctor someday." This rings so true, who will you have taking care of your mother, sister, brother, father if all the caregivers leave? Who will come to your aid if there is no one left? Great state of Alaska? Maybe once a long time ago. Not anymore and it shows with the record drop in population and workforce.

I implore you to not only consider SB 88 but work also together to find ways to smooth out the imperfections and give us something you and we can work with. Also ask you to look into the other bills that are for Pay and Geographical Differential surveys! This is mandated to be every 5 years.... last one 2009!!!!!!

We have troopers making a differential pay in Ketchikan of 7.5% and their coworker who lives in the same area a GGU employee gets 0... Same city, same employer yet drastically different and not ok.

If you can't do one, help with the other!

Thank you!

Jennifer Cole

Konrad Jackson

From: Senate Education
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 12:32 PM
To: Konrad Jackson
Subject: FW: SB 88 Written Testimony

Konrad,
This email was sent to the Senate Education Committee email address. FYI. Let me know if you need anything.
Peace,

Mike Mason
Staff to Sen. Löki Gale Tobin
Email: Michael.Mason@akleg.gov
Cellphone: 907-444-0889
Office: 907-465-3714

From: JOSHUA ROCKEY <Joshua.Rockey@matsuk12.us>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:46 AM
To: Senate Education <Senate.Education@akleg.gov>
Subject: FW: SB 88 Written Testimony

Hello,
I tried to send this to senate.finance@akleg.gov but it was returned. Please see below.

Joshua Rockey – Butte Elementary School, Principal
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District
Ph: 907-861-5200 | Direct: 907-861-5202
www.matsuk12.us/bte

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From: JOSHUA ROCKEY
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:44 AM
To: 'Senate.Finance@akleg.gov' <Senate.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: SB 88 Written Testimony

Esteemed State Senators,
My name is Joshua Rockey and I am principal of Butte Elementary, a K-5 school in the Mat-Su. Next year, I will be the principal at Swanson Elementary, a K-2 school in the Mat-Su. I have been in education since 2003 teaching in Chicago in a private school, substituting in the Mat-Su, teaching in the Mat-Su, and have spent the last 10 years as an administrator.

You have read written testimony from me before regrading the BSA, and further support for education. I spoke of staffing shortages, staff members covering odd and extra duties as a result, and lack of substitute coverage all as related topics. While all of those topics are immediate, the retirement consideration is a part of the long game.

As a Tier III employee, I am exactly the type of employee that this bill would impact. As I speak with my colleagues hired just one year before me, they talk about potential retirement in 8-10 years (I am currently in year 17 in the district with a full time position) based on their personal need timeline. When I look at the projected timeline for myself on the Alaska Retirement and Benefits Website, at half of my current income, I am not projected to be able to retire “safely” (money continues in perpetuity) until age 72. If I retire at 65, the money runs until 90. If I retire at age 60, the money runs out about age 78. As you can see, despite working 20 years in education, and for a long time in this district, my ability to retire safely is no sure thing for a long time.

As the perception and environment of teaching/administration deteriorated during Covid over the last two years, I considered changing fields altogether, but also considered simply leaving the State to continue to work in education. Every other state in the Union has a defined benefit pension plan. If I need to work a minimum of 18 years to have a retirement that expires quickly, why not head South, work for 20 years instead of 18 and combine that state’s pension with what I have accumulated here?

Ultimately, I chose to stay as I love the Valley and raising my family here. However, if the education environment continues to deteriorate, folks like me will leave. We already have a number of retirements from teachers and admin in Tier I and II, but I am seeing folks that are Tier III, and IV decide that it is not worth it to hang around.

If we want to invest in the long game of education, there needs to be some certainty for working in the field of education.

Please support creating additional retirement support.

Thank you for your time,

Joshua Rockey

Joshua Rockey – *Butte Elementary School, Principal*
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District
Ph: 907-861-5200 | Direct: 907-861-5202
www.matsuk12.us/bte

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Konrad Jackson

From: JOSHUA ROCKEY <Joshua.Rockey@matsuk12.us>
Sent: Monday, March 27, 2023 11:43 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Public Testimony on SB88

Esteemed State Representatives,

My name is Joshua Rockey and I am principal of Butte Elementary, a K-5 school in the Mat-Su. Next year, I will be the principal at Swanson Elementary, a K-2 school in the Mat-Su. I have been in education since 2003 teaching in Chicago in a private school, substituting in the Mat-Su, teaching in the Mat-Su, and have spent the last 10 years as an administrator.

You have read written testimony from me before regrading the BSA, and further support for education. I spoke of staffing shortages, staff members covering odd and extra duties as a result, and lack of substitute coverage all as related topics. While all of those topics are immediate, the retirement consideration is a part of the long game.

As a Tier III employee, I am exactly the type of employee that this bill would impact. As I speak with my colleagues hired just one year before me, they talk about potential retirement in 8-10 years (I am currently in year 17 in the district with a full time position) based on their personal need timeline. When I look at the projected timeline for myself on the Alaska Retirement and Benefits Website, at half of my current income, I am not projected to be able to retire "safely" (money continues in perpetuity) until age 72. If I retire at 65, the money runs until 90. If I retire at age 60, the money runs out about age 78. As you can see, despite working 20 years in education, and for a long time in this district, my ability to retire safely is no sure thing for a long time. None of this is a sure thing as it is all dependent on the stock market, which has been volatile of late.

As the perception and environment of teaching/administration deteriorated during Covid over the last two years, I considered changing fields altogether, but also considered simply leaving the State to continue to work in education. Every other state in the Union has a defined benefit pension plan. If I need to work a minimum of 18 years to have a retirement that expires quickly, why not head South, work for 20 years instead of 18 and combine that state's pension with what I have accumulated here?

Ultimately, I chose to stay as I love the Valley and raising my family here. However, if the education environment continues to deteriorate, folks like me will leave. We already have a number of retirements from teachers and admin in Tier I and II, but I am seeing folks that are Tier III, and IV decide that it is not worth it to hang around.

If we want to invest in the long game of education, there needs to be some certainty for working in the field of education.

Please support creating additional retirement support as detailed in SB88.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to reach out to me directly if you have any questions, or would like further information.

907-355-2581 on my cell phone, or at the numbers listed below for my office will all work.

Respectfully,

Joshua Rockey

Joshua Rockey – Butte Elementary School, Principal

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

Ph: 907-861-5200 | Direct: 907-861-5202

www.matsuk12.us/bte

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Konrad Jackson

From: Kate Quick <kquick49@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 12:44 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: SB88

To members of the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee, I'm writing to you today in support of SB88 and the return to a defined benefits plan for Alaska's public employees. I have lived in Fairbanks for 20 years and am raising three children here. My family would directly benefit from SB88.

I formerly worked as a professor at UAF, with a TRS tier IV defined contribution plan. My husband is also a public employee with a PERS defined contribution account, and we are concerned that we will not have enough money in our retirement accounts to ever fully retire.

Because of this (combined with decreasing quality of our public schools due to lack of funding), our family may be forced to relocate out of state for our long-term financial security. SB88 would fix this and would help ensure that our family is able to stay in Alaska. This bill is good for Alaska's public employees, and Alaska could not function without our public employees. Please pass SB88.

Best,
Kate Quick
2152 Bridgewater Dr.
Fairbanks, AK 99709

Konrad Jackson

From: Katie Mohn <catherine.l.mohn@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 2:12 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Senate bill 88

Good afternoon,

I am writing to you in support of Senate Bill 88 as a constituent, I am on a 15 minute break from work and am writing this on my personal phone. I have lived in Alaska for about 3 years now and have been a state employee under the department of public safety for a little over a year. I am very lucky to have my dream job at 25 years old and I love this state. I plan on staying in my role for as long as I can but setting myself up financially long term is challenging with the current plan. The current plan does not encourage young people to stay, if a pension plan is put in place I would switch and plan to stay. Please pass this bill and support our upcoming generation in todays workforce.

Thank you,

Catherine Mohn

Konrad Jackson

From: Hunter Meachum
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 3:08 PM
To: kenneth hoff
Cc: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: RE: This is a good thing

Hi Kenneth,

Thank you for copying Rep. Hannan on your email to Senator Giessel. You can send written comments on SB 88 to the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee at senate.labor.and.commerce@akleg.gov.

All the best,
Hunter

Hunter Meachum, MPA
Office of Representative Sara Hannan, District 4
Alaska State House of Representatives
Capitol, Room 400
(907) 465-4766

From: kenneth hoff <kenneth_hoff2002@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 11:49 AM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Cc: Rep. Andi Story <Rep.Andi.Story@akleg.gov>; Rep. Sara Hannan <Rep.Sara.Hannan@akleg.gov>; Sen. Jesse Kiehl <Sen.Jesse.Kiehl@akleg.gov>
Subject: This is a good thing

This is great to see this bill
I would like to give my testimony
I am a retired Correctional supervisor from lemon creek corrections
Thank you for your service and I will continue following this bill
I will be back in Juneau on Monday 3/27/2023
If there's a time that I can have a minute to talk about this with you or staff I would be grateful for that
Kenneth M Hoff

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

Konrad Jackson

From: Kevin Higgins <kahiggins1979@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 6:58 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Support for SB 88

Greetings,

I support SB 88. Since 2007, I have been a State employee for more than eight years. Despite my love for this State and my community, a recent pay increase, and a general satisfaction with my duties, my future here is uncertain.

I think about the lack of adequate funding for schools, with my sixth and second graders already staring down overcrowded classes and a lack of teachers willing to move here for insufficient compensation. I think about a defined contribution plan that won't support me throughout my hopeful retirement. I look to other nearby markets in places closer to older members of our family, who have moved away because of inadequate health care and other senior services and I wonder whether it finally is time.

Even in the coldest and wettest winters, I've never wanted to leave ... just to make it to spring. It's spring now. My uncertainty remains. I look to the economic weather that the Legislature is brewing for me, my wife, and our children, and I wonder whether a new dawn is breaking or this is just another sucker-hole before.

I support SB 88 because it is one (imperfect, not amazing) piece of a decent economic future for Alaskans, not just its employees.

Sincerely,
Kevin Higgins

Konrad Jackson

From: Kevin Higgins <kahiggins1979@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 7:02 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Support for SB 88

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Greetings,

I support SB 88. For more than eight years, I have been a State employee (as an assistant public defender and assistant attorney general). Despite my love for this State and my community, a recent pay increase, and a general satisfaction with my duties, my future here is uncertain.

I think about the lack of adequate funding for schools, with my sixth and second graders already staring down overcrowded classes and a lack of teachers willing to move here for insufficient compensation. I think about a defined contribution plan that won't support me throughout my hopeful retirement. I look to other nearby markets in places closer to older members of our family, who have moved away because of inadequate health care and other senior services, and I wonder whether it finally is time.

Even in the coldest and wettest winters, I've never wanted to leave ... just to make it to spring. It's spring now. My uncertainty remains. I look to the economic weather that the Legislature is brewing for me, my wife, and our children, and I wonder whether a new dawn is breaking or this is just another sucker-hole.

I support SB 88 because it is one (imperfect, not amazing) piece of a decent economic future for Alaskans, not just its employees.

Sincerely,
Kevin Higgins

Konrad Jackson

From: Kim Hays <Kimhays@outlook.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 1:26 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Support for SB 88

My name is Kim Hays and I am an Anchorage resident in the Sand Lake area. I am writing today to support SB 88, restoring a defined benefit option for public employees. As someone who works in the private sector and is very lucky to have a defined benefit pension, I understand what it means for me and my family to have that security in the future. Alaska's public employees deserve the same.

My whole life, I have benefited from the service of public employees - my mother worked in public schools, my dad delivered the mail. I know how hard working these folks are. And I will say that my parents are enjoying a retirement that their parents would never have had access to because of my father's defined benefit pension. And because of this pension, my parents have been highly involved grandparents, allowing my husband and I to be involved in our community while working.

I want to live in a state where I can have peace of mind that police will come when called, firefighters are available to put out fires, my kids' schools will have dedicated teachers, and NO Alaskan will starve due to lack of eligibility technicians verifying benefits. We aren't nearing a crisis- the crisis is here and has been here if we would have only listened to these public employees.

Public employees in this state are leaving in droves. On top of a lack of retirement security, they are not paid wages competitive with the private sector or competitive with the lower 48 which is an issue for another day. Those who are leaving have consistently referenced a lack of retirement as one of the top reasons. And over the years, analysis after analysis has been done to bring us to today with SB 88 the most modest version of a defined benefits program I've seen. If we want even a chance at recruiting or retaining our state's public employees this has to be step 1.

I urge this committee to do the right thing by our state's public servants and pass SB 88 out of committee to bring our public employee's one step closer to a retirement that honors their commitment to our state.

Konrad Jackson

From: Linda Kruger <lindalaska2003@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 9:41 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: SB 88

I am writing today to support SB 88 on improving pensions for public employees.
My name is Linda Kruger and I live at 3042 Nowell Avenue in Juneau.

I became a Tier 1 employee in 1976 when I accepted a job with DNR-State Parks.
I declined a job offer with the National Park Service in Glacier Bay in order to accept the State job.
The benefits package, including the defined benefit pension, was the deciding factor in my decision.
I left my job in 1989, after 13 years of State service, to attend Graduate School.

While in Graduate School I was recruited by the US Forest Service,
where I accepted a job as a Research Social Scientist.
I retired in 2019 after 28 years with the Forest Service.
In the years between my time with the State of Alaska and my time with the Forest Service
state salaries and benefits didn't keep pace while federal salaries and benefits increased.
Working for the Federal Government also meant that I could build up enough time to qualify for Social Security.

State of Alaska jobs are not competitive with similar Federal Government jobs or jobs in other states. In addition
to lower salaries and no defined benefits, there is no Social Security so many retirees are left with little money to
support them in retirement.

Please support a defined benefit pension so Alaska can compete for high quality employees to fill vacant positions and
retain those employees.

Linda Kruger
3042 Nowell Ave
Juneau AK 99803

lindalaska2003@gmail.com

Konrad Jackson

From: Marta Mueller <marta_mueller@mac.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 2:59 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: SB 88

Honorable Senator Bjorkman and Committee Members,

I support SB 88.

We heard a lot about recruitment and retention in today's SLAC Committee hearing on SB 88. And the costs of defined benefits.

So what?! Let me tell you what... poor recruitment and retention costs the State.

- 1) lost training effort when people leave public service
- 2) lost productivity when supervisors have to recruit instead of move forward
- 3) loss of innovation
- 4) overtime pay for routine work

When we have high and frequent turnover we lose the ability to learn our work to the point we can innovate and work efficiently.

I have had to fill the same Range 12 position 4 times in 3 years. It pays \$21 an hour on the current pay schedule. My current direct report wants to quit after the start of the fiscal year so he can cash out his Tier 4 funds and go to the private sector.

If you want good government, keep good employees. To keep good employees, you have to have good leadership and defined benefits.

Thank you for being good leaders and considering public employee retirement.

Regards,

Marta Mueller
7381 Huntsmen Circle B
Anchorage, AK 99518
(907)590-7678

Konrad Jackson

From: Mary Corcoran <marycorc@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 1:59 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Public Testimony SB88

To Labor and Commerce Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I urge you to support SB88 that makes available defined benefits to public employees. It is clear that the defined contribution retirement plan offers little to no security toward a realistic retirement. This is not only a drawback for attracting employees willing to invest their skills and experiences in Alaska public sector jobs, but also borders on disregard for those who perform high stress work day in and day out. While firefighter and law enforcement clearly put their lives on the line, those who work in schools and other public places are also vulnerable to stress and public threats.

As a retired teacher I could go on and on about all the add-ons that schools are required to demand from their employees. While I did not "sign on" in 1977 for the retirement benefits, I would be thinking hard about taking/continuing the work with the gamble of a defined contribution program.

Thank you for your attention and your work.

Sincerely,
Mary Corcoran
Delta Junction, AK

Konrad Jackson

From: Michael M <trekm16@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 23, 2023 3:13 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Senate Bill 88

Hello Senate Labor and Commerce Committee,

My name is Michael McGuffin and I am a GGU employee in the State of Alaska. I am a public employee and speaking on behalf of myself. I would like to support Senate Bill 88 changing my retirement to be pension based. As a millennial, my future seems uncertain. I want to have a good quality of life during my retirement and I also want to ensure my family can enjoy their lives knowing their father is taken care of.

I joined the State of Alaska in February and I would like to maintain employment with the State. However, I also need my benefits to be competitive and I want to put in quality work while knowing the State will compensate me well for my dedication.

Respectfully,

Michael McGuffin

Konrad Jackson

From: Morris White <morrisgwhite@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 27, 2023 11:57 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: SB88

I am an Alaskan educator and I wanted to write to give my unconditional support for the creation of a defined benefits plan for Alaska teachers.

Please pass this bill. The current situation is just not workable for many reasons.

Sincerely,

Morris White, MS
Math Educator

Konrad Jackson

From: Nate Davis <ndavis@lpsd.com>
Sent: Monday, March 27, 2023 11:51 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Fwd:

Senate Labor and Commerce Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Nate Davis. I am a principal for Lake and Peninsula School District. I am representing myself.

I am a 35 year Alaskan educator, with more than 25 of those years as a principal or superintendent of both public and private schools.

I am fiscally conservative and believe wholeheartedly in teacher and school accountability- we must deliver excellence to our parents (through their students' achievement).

Excellent education boils down to two things: #1) a longterm excellent teacher who is driven to succeed with integrity and kindness- a strong, positive role model, and #2) reasonable class size: 15-25. depending on age and subject area.

To help us recruit and retain #1 longterm excellent teachers, the defined benefit plan is a great incentive for teachers recruiting and retention.

I grew up in Alaska and earned my teaching credentials from UAA... but when I started teaching in Tier I I was surrounded by "outsiders" from the Lower 48 as my teaching colleagues. They openly talked about why they came to Alaska to teach: "I was gonna teach somewhere. Why not teach in Alaska where I could earn a much better salary than back home and retire in 20 years... then go back home and teach some more!" In reality, many, many "outside" teachers stayed much longer than 20 years in Alaska because it was now home (and they were given an add'l 2.5% for each year after 20). Excellent teachers stayed a long time = increased achievement for students.

When I went to the job fair to get my first job in 1989, there were about 800 applicants, but only about 100 positions open statewide. Now, as a principal when we try to hire at the job fair, there are about 100 applicants and AK districts hire about 1000 teachers a year.

My own journey took me to private schools for about 17 years and when I returned to Alaska's public schools in Tier III, I saw that the lack of defined benefit resulted in a lack of commitment for younger teachers and undecidedness for older teachers. The younger were happy to put in 5 years so they were fully vested, but with a low Alaska salary they could then go on home after that, get paid about the same, and be around family... or pick up any job around town and get paid more. The older teachers really have no security with the 401K rolling up and down through the market and would either hang on (sometimes longer than they were effective) because they never knew what the market was going to do to their fund... or they would just quit and start a business or something else that they loved to do and would generate more funds.

To get the best teachers who will stay for 30 years, we either need to be the highest paying or the best retirement for educators (or both), but right now we are neither... and hiring 1000 or more teachers every year is a recipe for mediocrity for children, at best- and, in many cases, it is a recipe for failure.

Now, in a massive national teacher shortage where few young people are attracted to become an educator at all... AND offering lower than average pay AND no defined benefit... it sounds a lot like three strikes.

To improve education, we must recruit excellent teachers whom we can train and who will stay for 5-10 years... and the defined benefit SB 88 is a good hit- one of the pillars to attract and retain.

I support SB 88... thanks for the conversation!

Thanks,

Nate Davis,

Educating servant leaders who empower their families and communities!

Principal @ Tanalian & Lake View Schools 907.529.6293

Academic Excellence. Strength of Character. Achievement in Life.

READ PLENTY. MAKE A WAY. READ 20. EVERY DAY.

Let kindness and truth never leave you. Make it a grrreat day!

Konrad Jackson

From: Nicole Lundstrom <nikkicslc@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 2:57 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: SB88

Good afternoon,

I'm a current employee in Tier IV, and while I would like to have a pension plan I feel that the bigger issues facing public employees are the IRS Windfall Elimination and Government Pension Offset Provisions. The IRS views the Tier IV Defined Contribution Plan as a pension plan and it is not. I understand that I don't pay into Social Security; however, I did for many years prior to working in a public sector. I feel it is unfair that my SS benefit and or spousal SS benefit will be reduced due to my 10 years of public service. Tier IV is not a true pension plan, and I also get penalized by the IRS for my public service.

My concerns about the WEP and GPO have also been sent to Senator Sullivan, Senator Murkowski, and Representative Peltola.

I appreciate your consideration.

Kind regards,

Nicole Lundstrom

Konrad Jackson

From: Nina Faust <aknina51@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 18, 2023 9:10 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Education Funding

I firmly believe that providing a pension for our education employees will help alleviate the problem in finding qualified people to staff our schools. Right now there is not even the option to participate in Social Security. Without a defined benefits program for retirement, Alaska is not a desirable place to work for teachers, principals and other support staff.

Respectfully,
Nina Faust

P.O. Box 2994
Homer AK 99603

March 17, 2023

Legislators
Alaska State House and Alaska State Senate
Juneau AK

Dear Legislators:

As a retired high school teacher, I have watched the slow dismantling of Alaska's once celebrated and proud, quality educational system that attracted excellent educators from all over the country. Now I think our schools are less than constitutionality adequate. Funding for Alaska's educational system, K-12 and university, has been cut and underfunded for years and is now showing just how inadequately funded our schools are.

One of the first things to go was the employee pension system. Now the State's school districts are finding it very difficult to attract certified teachers, principals, and support staff. Alaska can no longer compete for the best candidates because we have no pension system nor are teachers allowed to participate in Social Security. Furthermore, salaries are no longer competitive.

Deferred facility maintenance is crippling school districts and causing unsafe conditions, as well as serious damage to facilities (roofs leaking water into school libraries). In many communities, school closures are under consideration. Counselor and nurse positions have been cut when our children are at serious risk for suicide and other mental health problems or are vulnerable to drug and alcohol addiction. Many families are still dysfunctional due to the pandemic, job loss, and financial woes. To be adequate for the level of student needs, schools should be adding counselors and nurses, not letting them go.

Wildly fluctuating energy costs have strained school budgets. Inflation has made the cost of classroom supplies, books, computers, and all that is necessary to keep up with technological changes beyond currently funded budgets.

We cannot keep cutting programs or staff after all the past cuts and the lack of any increases to keep up with cost of living and inflation. The Kenai Peninsula School District, once a district with nationally distinguished schools of excellence, is now contemplating cuts to theater programs, pools, music, art, and sports. I believe that if these cuts stand, the State will be violating the constitution. Surely we should be teaching the whole student and be including life skills like swimming and providing for those students who are artistically inclined or kinesthetically talented. For these students, the classes now on the chopping block are the reason many even come to school.

The State of Alaska is constitutionally required to provide Alaskans with an adequate educational system, not a diminished, struggling, underfunded system as we have now. We should not be having to choose between offering just basic academics or a full curriculum that includes arts, theater, swimming, and sports. We need to education the students in all areas because if we do not, those who are motivated by their artistic and kinesthetic talents that are met by these so-called "expendable classes" will be left to fall through the cracks. These cuts will be countered by higher costs to the community from increased crime, drug and alcohol problems, mental health issues, and domestic violence.

We also cannot keep increasing class size. Smaller classes means that a teacher will not have time to work individually with each student. Having worked in a classroom with more than 30 students, I know how difficult it is to even have a chance to talk individually with each student during a classroom period. Increasing class size reduces quality education.

Additionally, our university system needs to have funding restored. Scholarship programs should be fully funded and need to be predictable. Students cannot plan their educations if we keep cutting programs students need for their degrees. We should beef up our nursing program so we have more locally educated nurses here in Alaska. Provide scholarships or grants that will be forgiven if they work in

state. A good university system will help bring in young people who will want to work here, especially if we make sure our system is competitive with other state universities.

Rather than continuing to avoid making the hard choices, it is time for the Legislature to devise a plan to provide stable revenue sources to fund needed state services, especially education. The out migration of skilled workers should be a warning to Legislators that folks want good schools, and they must be funded fully to meet the standard of an adequate educational program. We are at a point where we have fallen far short of that.

So I urge you to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA). Given all the monetary shortfalls, inflation, and continuing increased costs due to supply chain issues, energy, labor shortages, and more, I suggest raising the BSA to \$1000. To pay for this, I recommend a modest PFD because good adequately funded schools benefit each community. Change the oil tax system so the oil and gas industries pay a fair share back to the state. Institute a flat rate income tax based on a percentage of how much a taxpayer pays to the federal government. Increase the tax on vaping. We cannot cut our way to a balanced budget on the back of education or other necessary community services. We need to contribute to maintaining and providing services.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Nina Faust

Konrad Jackson

From: Pamela Lloyd <pamela.lloyd5@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 4:20 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: SB 88 Pensions

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Senators,
I apologize for not getting this letter in before the 1:30 meeting. I mistakenly wrote to the representatives.

I am writing in support of HB 88. Pensions are community assets. Pensions kept Alaska and our communities alive during the COVID crisis. Pensioners had guaranteed income that was spent to support the community through groceries, entertainment, etc.

A defined benefit pension portfolio has funds to meet obligations and the whole (a community) succeeds. Whereas with a 401(k) an individual has to manage their own funds. This responsibility is overwhelming and is proving not to be successful. People are not able to invest as they are living day to day in most cases.

Our public employees are handcuffed and may have to work their entire lives to survive to old age because they don't have a defined benefit nor can they collect Social Security. Workers are leaving in droves. I have known many public employees in education who have left after 5 years of working, taking their contribution as well as their employers' contributions and are leaving Alaska for a better retirement. Alaska is their training ground and we are losing valuable employees, losing the cost of training them and the loss of friends. This current retirement system is NOT sustainable for our public employees.

I read that the governor and commissioners have received substantial raises this year. \$33,600 per year for commissioners and \$43,000 for our governor. Governor Dunlevy stated in a recent newspaper **"to continue attracting the best and the brightest Alaskans to manage state departments, he believes salary increases for commissioners that offset the impact of inflation are appropriate"**.

What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

Our public employees also need to earn a decent living wage and have a guaranteed defined benefit.
Thank you,

Pamela Lloyd
30238 White Spruce Av.
Sterling, AK. 99672
907.242.6007

Sent from my iPhone
Pamela Lloyd

Konrad Jackson

From: Paul Kelly <kelly.paul.r@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 20, 2023 1:56 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Spoken testimony offered at SL&C re SB 88 on 3/20/23

Through the chair, Members of Senate Labor and Commerce, my name is Paul Kelly. I am president of AFSCME/ASEA Local 52 Juneau Chapter and an employee of DEED. What I have to tell you today is on behalf of myself and my union chapter, not my employer. I'm testifying on my own time.

I'd like to thank you for hearing this bill today. I'd also like to ask you a question. How many of you ran for office for the pay bump? I doubt it was any of you. How many of you would have run if it didn't work out you or for your families? As a former member of the Juneau Board of Education, I know that those are some of the first considerations we make when we decide to run. As a state employee, and someone who counts teachers in Juneau and Anchorage among his personal friends, I know this is also a consideration we make.

Bottom line, most public jobs do NOT complete with their equivalents in the private sector in terms of pay or benefits. Yet we know that we need our teachers, we need people processing food stamp applications. We need firefighters, social workers, and our police.

The members of my chapter and the teachers I know do our work because it's our passion. We believe in what we do, in helping our neighbors. On the other hand, all of us have friends who've turned down jobs in public service or who've taken jobs in other states because they offer more in pay and benefits and because they had to put their families first. They had to think of their own futures, especially since we are NOT entitled to social security.

As this bill progresses, you will no doubt be hearing how in the long term, this plan actually saves the state money; not just because we retain the employees we've trained but because it's just a better investment style.

So, if you want to go home and tell your voters and constituents that you've ensured they'll have the teachers, firefighters, police, and DPA personnel they need AND have saved the state money; then you want to pass this bill and advocate for it with your colleagues in the House and the Governor.

Thank you for your time.

--

Paul Kelly

907-240-3447

Konrad Jackson

From: Peter Hoepfner <hoepfner@alaskan.com>
Sent: Monday, March 27, 2023 7:00 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Support for SB 88, and going back to defined benefits

Thank you to the Senators on the Labor and Commerce committee for taking comments on this important legislation.

My name is Peter Hoepfner, VP of Cordova School Board.

I have been seated on governor dunlevys 2020 Teacher Retention and Recruitment Working Group, and sit on all 4 subcommittees; Retention, Recruitment, Alternative Certification, and Organizational Health.

This group will be shortly come out with recommendations from the 2-3 years of work on the TRR issues facing alaska. The Alaska Teacher Retirement System was a large portion of this work, and everyone realizes that not having a good retirement system in place is affecting recruitment of teachers in alaska.

The retirement issue, and turmoil caused by changing the retirement system for teachers from defined benefits to a defined contributions in 2006, does not help the state in getting teachers to come to alaska. And in actuality, incentivizes teachers to leave after 5 years.. Knowing that other states pay teachers a better starting salary, and have better retirement systems, alaska is not seeing individuals applying to become teachers in alaska.

When one realizes that the retirement system is VERY important to teachers, as they do not qualify for Social Security in the state of Alaska.

Thank you for reading this support letter for HB 88, and assisting the education of Alaskans children with passage of this bill.

Peter Hoepfner

Thumbed in from my iPhone

Konrad Jackson

From: Sam Tauriainen <samueldallas@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 10:18 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Senate Bill 88

I fully believe in this bill. This is a way to support our public employees who put others first and sacrifice their time and effort. Especially the firefighters and police officers. They put their body on the line and statistically have shorter careers because of it. This pension system would create a fair retirement for those groups of employees. And I also believe that it would lead to better recruitment and retention for those employees because now there is a bigger incentive to stay.

Sent from my iPhone

Konrad Jackson

From: Sharon Clawson <sharonrandevu@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 25, 2023 11:03 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Public schools funding

Our State and its well being and economic stability require an educated citizenry and work force. The destructive cuts to our Universities and public schools and the lack of pre school opportunities are devastating to Alaska. The brain drain of post secondary students, the teacher turnover and vacancies, the unequal readiness of five year olds for success at school are setting us up for a failed State.

The costs of mediocre academic and vocational skills will be more expensive in the future, as they are currently lowering the cultural, financial, structural and political standards here. Recovery from this will be difficult to achieve.

Increase school and college funding and make Alaska a place talent wants to remain, return to or move here with security of retirement to compensate for the mediocre salaries offered to public employees.

Sharon Clawson

Beneficiary of working and retiring in Alaska before PFD corrupted voters and elected State officials

Sent from my iPad

Konrad Jackson

From: tom schwartz <telesquid@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 2:18 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: SB 88 Public Comment

Dear Senators,

My name is Thomas Schwartz and I live at 2973 Foster Ave. in Juneau, AK.

I have been working as a teacher for eight years without a pension. We are the only state in the union that does not value education and teachers enough to provide a funded retirement plan for their dedicated service. This affects the number of teachers who will leave the state for better opportunities as well as those looking to move to Alaska in the future.

Please show the teachers that they are valued by supporting SB 88 and reinstating the pension system.

Thank you,

Thomas Schwartz

Konrad Jackson

From: Zac Smith <zsmith@kuspuk.org>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 1:32 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: Sb 88

I do not support the bill. So many pension plans/defined benefit plans go defunct or bankrupt. Defined contribution plans can and do work for real private businesses in this state and throughout the country.

I believe it would be better to fix the system we already have by:

1. Switching to a better vendor than Empower, such as Vanguard which has lower fees (or offering a choice of vendors)
2. Allowing employees AND employers to contribute above the required %
3. Having all the retirement information available in at least one place online. (Currently years of service and contribution transactions are only on myAlaska drb and fund balance, fees, and investment options are only on empower's website)

I have previously worked 6 years in a school in the current system. My wife has worked 10 years in a school in the current system

I am currently a school board member.

My name is Brittany Stillie, I am from Fairbanks, I have worked for DOFFP as a wildland firefighter since 2012. I am speaking on behalf of myself, these opinions are my own.

I am here to express my support for SB88, which would provide a choice between Defined Contributions and a Defined Benefit retirement plan. As someone who has dedicated their life to this profession, I can attest to the fact that this change would greatly benefit recruitment and retention efforts and improve public safety and protection from wildland fires.

In my profession, I have witnessed the loss of a considerable amount of highly trained and experienced firefighters due to pay and benefits that are not competitive with other agencies and the private sector. This has resulted in a significant loss of skills and knowledge that are critical for combating wildfires and protecting the public.

SB88 would address the benefits side of the issue creating more stability and security for our firefighters. I think this would be an excellent investment for the SOA, making the profession more attractive to potential recruits and encourage experienced firefighters to stay in the program.

About 70% of money spent on Alaska wildfires last year went to outside resources. Outside resources are much more expensive and unfamiliar with unique Alaska firefighting methods and fuel types. Having a more experienced and stable wildland firefighting staff, the state would save the state money in the long run.

Committee Members I Urge you to support SB88 because it will help protect the people of the state of Alaska. Thank you for your time.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY SB 88

Senator Bjorkman and Senate Labor and Commerce Committee

Greetings. My name is Roxanne Abajian. I reside in Ketchikan and have lived here since 1979. I retired from teaching after 2 years as a volunteer teacher with Jesuit Volunteer Corps and 36 years in the Ketchikan Gateway Public Schools. I'm testifying on behalf of myself, my son, and current public-school educators.

Thank you for the opportunity to give public testimony in support of SB 88.

I retired with a TRS Tier 1 Defined Benefit Pension. When I started in 1979, my salary was approximately \$26,000. My sister, who had not finished college, was making twice what I made. By the early 90s I was making about \$40,000. By then my sister, who still had not completed her last year of college, was making \$150,000. I groaned to my cousin, also a teacher, that I couldn't believe how much more my sister made than me. He pointed out that *I had a pension plan, and my sister did not. Lower wages for public service employees were a tradeoff for a secure and stable retirement.* I stayed in the profession I loved, working long hours and volunteering for many committees and events.

Defined Benefit (DB) pension plans are a powerful and positive economic tool and it is important that they are funded. Pension plans support economic activity, jobs, and incomes. Because I have a stable retirement, I am able to contribute to the economy of my community and to my state. I shop at local stores, buy gas, groceries, eat out, contribute to nonprofit organizations, and I travel within the state.

We have a son who also is a teacher. He would love to return to Alaska but without a pension nor Social Security, he would have no secure or stable retirement. (Teachers don't make the wages my sister made in the private sector.)

I've watched many younger teachers remain in their districts for about 5 years and then leave. We have a severe recruitment and retention problem in districts across the state. Defined Benefit Pensions provide incentive to attract and retain public service employees.

Today, during the Public Testimony, I listened to a few speakers state that *"we can't afford to reinstate a Define Benefit Pension plan"*. I agree with journalist and author Mark Miller when he addressed a conference I recently attended. He said, *"Making sure our public service employees have a dignified and secure retirement is a question of values, not money. Money is found when we want to do something."*

Senate Bill 88 is not a return to the DB retirement plan that I earned. It is a modest proposal, but it's a much-needed start. It's an investment in our state.

I strongly encourage all legislators and constituents in the room to read the research of the **National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS)**. NIRS is a non-profit and non-partisan organization established to contribute to informed policymaking by understanding the value of retirement security to employees, employers, and the economy. Learn more about NIRS at: www.nirsonline.org. Read what the experts doing the research have to say.

Pensionomics State Data 2023

Pensionomics 2023: Measuring the Economic Impact of Defined Benefit Pension Expenditures calculates the national economic impacts of U.S pension plans, as well as the impact of state and local plans on a state-by-state basis. The full report is available [here](#).

Pensionomics 2023:

Measuring the Economic Impact of DB Pension Expenditures in Alaska

https://www.nirsonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/pensionomics2023_AK.pdf

Thank you for listening to my testimony (or in this case reading).

Roxanne Abajian

Ketchikan, Alaska

roxanne.abajian@gmail.com