

**Alaska Public Employees Association/AFT (AFL-CIO)**

**State Headquarters**

151 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Juneau, Alaska 99801

**Phone:** (907) 586-2334 / (800) 478-9991

**Website:** www.apea-aft.org



Honorable Cathy Giessel  
State Senator District E  
State Capitol Room 427  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Giessel,

On behalf of the thousands of hard-working men and women of the Alaska Public Employees Association I thank you for introducing Senate Bill 88. APEA/AFT is an association of twenty-four public employee unions. The Association represents thousands of workers in every region of Alaska, and in every legislative district. We represent school support staff and teachers, local government employees, faculty, and staff at the University of Alaska; State Supervisors including State Troopers and Correctional Officers, Classified Employees at the State of Alaska; and several non-profits that provide services in education and mental health. While our members work is diverse, the common denominator among them is selfless and professional service to the people of Alaska in the public interest. APEA/AFT member leaders have consistently passed resolutions calling for a return to a Defined Benefit.

Senate Bill 88 is the result of years of hard work, and consensus among effected employee groups, and does not include everything our members would like to see in a final product including a status quo health care plan that falls short of the benefits offered in the legacy PERS and TERS tiers. Despite this, we will not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. We support Senate Bill 88 because it threads the needle by providing a pension benefit that our members can rely on in their retirement while imposing risk sharing features that will ensure the plan is successful long term. We are committed to the success of SB 88.

For many years, the employment pattern among Alaska public employees was to work a full 30-year career and retire, while the wages in the public sector remain uncompetitive with the private sector, the promise of a secure and reliable retirement was enough to balance the equation and long term employment was typical among our membership. When the state moved away from a pension plan in 2005, opting instead for 401(K) style plans alone, employees no longer have an incentive to work a full career in public service. This has led to a new employment pattern where employees come to work for the state, are trained, stay for five years, and then cash out their 401(k) and move to the private sector to higher paid jobs, or out migrate to work in public service in other states like Washington, Idaho, or Montana. All of which offer defined benefit pensions.

The abject failure of the state to recruit and retain public servants affects each and every Alaska citizen, business and family. When Alaska got rid of pensions we were the guinea pig for the rest of the country, and our experience is a 17 year study in what not to do. Now the legislature knows better. We encourage the legislature and the administration to consider Senate Bill 88 favorably and work with us to make careers in public service attractive for employees.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Kasper", is written over a horizontal line.

Jeff Kasper  
Business Manager  
APEA/AFT

**Anchorage Field Office**

3310 Arctic Blvd., Ste 200, Anchorage, AK 99503

Phone: (907) 274-1688 / (800) 478-9992 \* Fax: 277-4588

**Fairbanks Field Office**

825 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701

Phone: (907) 456-5412 / (800) 478-9993 \* Fax: 456-7478

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** FW: In Support of SB 88  
**Date:** Monday, March 27, 2023 10:14:07 AM

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**From:** Jon Kulhanek <[jon.kulhanek@g.kpbsd.org](mailto:jon.kulhanek@g.kpbsd.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 27, 2023 10:12 AM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** In Support of SB 88

Dear Senator Giessel,

As an Alaska educator, I want to thank you for prioritizing Alaska students and public education in the budget. I especially would like to thank you for your work on SB 88. As you now know, Alaska educators have the worst retirement system in the country, and the turnover it's causing is correlated with poor student achievement. I have taught in Alaska for the past 12 years, all of them for the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. I love teaching. I love working with students and enriching their lives. However, I fall under the Alaska tier III retirement system. This is not a good system. Currently I am part of a defined contribution plan that simply will not allow me to retire with dignity. When I consider the fact that I will have zero guaranteed benefits beyond the amount in my retirement account my resolve to stay in the profession I love waivers. Not only my desire to stay in teaching, but also my desire to stay in the state of Alaska. According to Dianne Hirshberg of the UAA Center for Education Policy Research at ISER: The 5 school districts with the LOWEST turnover had 85.8% of students scoring proficient in reading. The 5 school districts with the HIGHEST turnover had only 46.9% of students scoring proficient in reading. Teacher turnover is hurting our students. SB 88 represents the possibility of a return to a real retirement system for educators and other public employees in Alaska. This change would have a positive impact on our students, our communities, and our state and local economies. Currently, educators hired after 2006, like myself, have only a defined contribution retirement option. This system means those educators will outlive their retirement savings. I love my job, I love working with students, and I love Alaska, however, without any access to a secure income in retirement for myself, or any educator entering our system, I'm losing hope. SB 88 represents a chance to reverse this devastating trend and provide a real retirement option to thousands of dedicated teachers like myself. I implore you to continue to review this issue, work on SB 88, and pass this bill before the end of the session. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jon Kulhanek

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** FW: SB 88  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 6:51:03 AM

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**From:** Bobby Burgess <[robert.a.burgess.ak@gmail.com](mailto:robert.a.burgess.ak@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 6:15 AM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** SB 88

Hello Senator Giessel,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 88 to improve retirement benefits for state employees. Please share this with the rest of the labor and commerce committee.

I have worked for the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Division of Spill Prevention and Response, Contaminated Sites Program for about 10 years. Of the employees hired since I joined, a majority have left the department after two or three years, most frequently citing offers of better pay or benefits from consulting firms or regulated companies. The department has also had to lower its standards for hiring due to a lack of applicants, no longer requiring a science or engineering degree for positions that require a strong background in science. The result of this are increased need for investment in recruitment and training, costing the department and state additional money to onboard new staff; as well as creating delays in serving the public, assisting industry in regulatory compliance and spill cleanup, and responding to spills.

Essentially, our department has become a training program for industry and consulting. If we can't recruit and retain qualified people in these positions, it costs the state and its people both in funding and in health and safety of our communities and workforce.

Even more concerning to me is the fact that these same recruitment and retention issues are applicable to teachers and other educational professionals. I joined the Fairbanks Borough School District School Board budget advisory committee this past fall, and a major issue is teacher retention and recruitment. Budget situations are dire, but this bill could help with some of the district's woes by providing better incentives for educators.

Thank you for your work.  
Robert Burgess  
Fairbanks

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Senate Bill 88  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 8:47:36 AM

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**From:** Carl Koch <micp1440@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 7:28 AM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 88

Dear Senator Giessel,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 88. I am a state employee of 15 years and about 10 years from retirement. I have seen many state employees leave for other agencies or private sector jobs with better salaries but also primarily because of the lack of a defined benefit pension plan. I have also seen many state workers overloaded with more tasks than can possibly be accomplished because colleagues quit for greener pastures and those jobs typically take a year to fill. Passing this bill is the right thing to do for Alaska. It will help retain workers within the state of Alaska and it will help take care of workers who have spent their careers working for the State of Alaska to help make it a better place to live.

Sincerely,

Carl H. Koch  
4500 Hillcrest Ave  
Juneau, AK 99901

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Senate Bill 88  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 6:47:21 AM

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**From:** Leah Maltbie <leahmaltbie@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 21, 2023 7:04 PM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 88

Cathy,

To make this short and sweet, I full support the Senate Bill 88 for reinstating defined benefits for state employees including teachers and educators. This move will help our teacher shortage and help retain quality teachers in the state.

Thank you

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Support for SB 88  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 21, 2023 5:23:24 PM

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**From:** Currey, Jeff L (DOT) <jeff.currey@alaska.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 21, 2023 5:05 PM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>; Senate Labor and Commerce <Senate.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov>  
**Subject:** Support for SB 88

To the Honorable Senator Giessel and SLAC:

For the record, my name is Jeff Currey. I am employed by the State of Alaska's Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) as an engineer, but I am writing on behalf of myself, after working hours. I strongly support SB 88. Please feel free to share any portion of the following testimony.

I came to work for DOT&PF in 2000, from the mining and mineral exploration private sector. I accepted a substantial salary cut switching to State employment, but the benefits, including the PERS III Defined Benefit pension plan, made that decision the correct one for me and my family. When the State switched to the PERS Tier IV Defined Contribution plan in 2006, I did not recognize what a bad decision that was, but since then it has become patently obvious.

Those of us with Defined Benefit pensions joke that they are "the golden handcuffs"-Every year of service increases one's pension. I could make a larger salary in the private sector, and while I am proud to be a DOT&PF employee and (mostly) enjoy my job, I have had attractive offers elsewhere. The guaranteed increase in my pension for each year of service has been a strong incentive for completing my career with the State. I know this is true for other Defined Benefit-Tier employees as well-we talk.

On the other hand, the portable, 401K-style Defined Contribution does nothing to incentivize employee retention. On the contrary, as you heard in committee testimony Monday, the Alaska's defined contribution plan provides uncertainty, and its portability incentivizes trained and skilled worker outmigration to states offering a real pension, or to better paying private sector employment. I have seen this happen over and over with less senior, Tier IV DOT&PF employees. I know it is a routine occurrence in other agencies as well.

I supervise a very effective, high performing section in Northern Region DOT&PF. Many of the staff I supervise are PERS Tier IV, and I constantly worry about losing my best employees. Providing them the opportunity to buy their way back into a defined contribution might not shackle them with the "platinum handcuffs" of Tiers I and II, but "silver handcuffs" would still make leaving look less attractive. Without a doubt, creating a Defined Benefits Tier V plan option will improve State of Alaska recruitment and retention. Please pass SB 88.

Sincerely,

Jeff L. Currey, P.E.  
NR Materials Engineer, DOT&PF  
907-451-2040  
Cell 907-750-5989

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: SB 88  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:45:51 AM

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Best regards,  
Cathy

Senator Cathy Giessel  
[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)  
907.465.4843

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Guzman, Susan" <[SGuzman@kpb.us](mailto:SGuzman@kpb.us)>  
**Date:** March 22, 2023 at 11:29:40 AM AKDT  
**To:** "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** SB 88

Senator Giessel,

I am writing in support of SB 88. I would like to see the defined benefits returned to government employees. I work for the Kenai Peninsula Borough and returning to the defined benefits package would be one more tool to recruit and keep good employees. We have lost many key personnel to the private sector either due to money or retirement benefits. Your support of SB 88 would be very much appreciated!

Thank you,

*Susan Guzman*  
*Exemption Examiner*  
*KPB Assessing Department*

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: SB 88 testimony  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:46:54 AM

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Best regards,  
Cathy

Senator Cathy Giessel  
[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)  
907.465.4843

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** [larafahnlander@gmail.com](mailto:larafahnlander@gmail.com)  
**Date:** March 22, 2023 at 11:11:33 AM AKDT  
**To:** "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Cc:** "Sen. David Wilson" <[Sen.David.Wilson@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.David.Wilson@akleg.gov)>, "Rep. David Eastman" <[Rep.David.Eastman@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.David.Eastman@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** **SB 88 testimony**

To whom it may concern,  
My name is Lara Fahnlander, I am a teacher in the MatSu school district since 2017 and have been teaching in Alaska since 2007. In 2021 I had a surprise diagnosis of a terminal cancer. There is absolutely no disability support from the State of Alaska, but there is for Tier 1 and Tier 2 teachers. The state website hides the fact that Tier 3 teachers are excluded until you call and find out that none of the disability benefits displayed apply to Tier 3 teachers. Tier 3 workers are also not supported by the national disability system because of our inability to participate in social security. Is it acceptable that person be left with no defined pension, no access to social security, or social security disability and no disability support from their own state?

The situation I'm in is inhumane and I never imagined this would be my fate purely because I dedicated my life's work to the children of Alaska. I wish this fate on no one and pray you will overturn the decision before ruining more lives. As it stands I would never encourage anyone to teach in this state. I hope you will use the power of your position for the good of your students and dedicated workers.

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: SB 88  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 21, 2023 2:30:44 PM

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Best regards,  
Cathy

Senator Cathy Giessel  
[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)  
907.465.4843

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Lynnette McNutt <[lynnette.mcnutt@juneauschools.org](mailto:lynnette.mcnutt@juneauschools.org)>  
**Date:** March 21, 2023 at 2:27:35 PM AKDT  
**To:** "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** **SB 88**

Hello Senator Giessel,  
My name is Lynnette McNutt and I am a teacher for the J.S.D. working without a pension. Please show your support for educators by supporting SB 88.

Thank you,  
Lynnette McNutt

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Senate Bill 88  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 3:02:11 PM

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Best regards,  
Cathy

Senator Cathy Giessel  
[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)  
907.465.4843

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Becky Charlton <[quail@ptialaska.net](mailto:quail@ptialaska.net)>  
**Date:** March 22, 2023 at 2:23:41 PM AKDT  
**To:** "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** **Senate Bill 88**

Dear Senator Giessel,  
My name is Rebecca Charlton, and I live in Sitka, AK.  
I'm writing to thank you for your support for SB 88.  
I worked for the Sitka School District for 25 years as a Tier II employee. I have children working for the State of Alaska at Tier 3 and 4. I fear for their retirement years.  
The State of Alaska has demoralized their employees. This school year hundred of teachers were lacking in every district statewide. Our local paper for weeks have advertised local city and state positions that have gone unfilled. The bottom line is no one wants these once sought after positions. They lack incentive benefits, offer no pension and no Social Security.  
Also, state retirees often get hit with the Windfall Provision Act and the Government Pension Offset making the situation even worse.  
The Senate needs to correct a failing retirement system by supporting SB 88. Please return the Defined Benefit Contribution back to hard working employees.  
Thank you,  
Rebecca Charlton

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Senate Bill 88  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:46:27 AM

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Best regards,  
Cathy

Senator Cathy Giessel  
Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov  
907.465.4843

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Deb Goodell <debgkiesa@gmail.com>  
**Date:** March 22, 2023 at 11:22:49 AM AKDT  
**To:** "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>  
**Subject: Senate Bill 88**

Senator Giessel,

Thank you for your persistence.

I hope that this bill includes compensation for the current state employees that are not benefiting from the defined benefit system. The state needs to take care of them for all these years of service with marginal benefits.

As a retired Para-Professional of 20 plus years that receives the Defined Benefit, I have huge compassion for my colleagues that do not have the same security. The state system needs to take care of its own: the dedicated support staff that provide professional services at barely a living wage.

All state employees should, in my opinion, be included for their years of previous service and from today forward.

Thanks.

Deb Goodell  
Kodiak  
former KIBSD employee

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** FW: SB 88  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 6:50:53 AM

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**From:** George Hoden <georgehoden@msn.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 21, 2023 10:21 PM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>  
**Subject:** SB 88

Please recognize that public employees are civil servants who could be paid much more and receive other benefits working in private industry. Help us with future compensation in our retirements by passing SB 88.

George Hoden - State of Alaska Employee

# Pension reform testimony ideas

**“Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.** *For the record,* My name is Harlee Harvey from Point Hope, AK. I am speaking on behalf of myself and as the 2023 Alaska State teacher of the year and a finalist for 2023 National Teacher of the Year. I am speaking in support of SB88.

I was born and raised in Alaska, grew up in Fairbanks, and now I teach at Tikiġaq School in Point Hope, where I have taught for 9 years. Last year, when I counted how many teachers I have seen come through, I could name over seventy teachers. Over seventy teachers have passed through my building, where we have 23 certified teaching positions employed. Some of these are older teachers, but many of them are younger, who come to Alaska wanting to start a career in teaching. However, once they see the hardships and struggles of teaching rurally, paired with a retirement system that is not going to help them plan for their future or their families' future, they are disinclined to stay beyond a couple years. These are amazing educators with a passion for working with children, but they also have to make decisions based on what makes the most sense financially for their futures.

I have seen too many friends and colleagues either teaching on the North Slope or who I grew up with that could not stay in teaching here in Alaska because of the lack of a long-term retirement option. They teach here in Alaska for *maybe* five years at most, and take their 401(k) earnings and move to another state where they can continue to add to that while earning a pension. I frequently hear teachers talk about their “five year plan” to stay in the state before moving on.

The educators in our buildings are the lifeblood of our schools and the stability of teaching staff is the greatest contributor to student success in any school. Research has shown that we cannot educate our students effectively when we have the turnover rate we currently have. Recently, I found out that only 15% of teachers in my district stay past two years. I want to work with colleagues for more than one year or two years. I want to work with them for many years, cooperatively building a better school for our students and communities. But our system hurts our teachers and does not encourage that retention. Ultimately, this means the system is hurting our students, which I see every day.

Here on the North Slope, we used to have the highest salary in the entire nation. That is no longer the case, which means we are not as attractive or competitive as we used to be in recruiting teachers both within and outside of the state. Part of this is because we have the worst retirement system in the entire nation. The defined contribution basically means we do not have a pension. We're the only state in the entire nation without Social Security or pension of any kind for our teachers.

Year after year, my district spends more and more money, trying to recruit teachers from across the country. Retirement is a real obstacle of that. And the cost only grows as inflation increases and the market place for teachers becomes more competitive. Please help my district, help my students, and help students across all Alaska to recruit and retain teachers by fixing the retirement system and adopting SB88.

**From:** [Allison Smith](#)  
**To:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**Cc:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** In support of SB 88  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 7:55:15 AM

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Dear Senator Giessel and members of the committee,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 88. I am a teacher in Juneau and was fortunate to be hired in 2005, shortly before the state eliminated the defined benefit system for teachers and state workers.

The lack of defined benefit system for teachers in Tier III and Tier IV has led to a huge amount of teacher turnover. There is no incentive for teachers in these tiers to continue teaching in Alaska until a normal age of retirement. Alaska is the only state in the union where teachers do not have a pension or social security.

The past several years have been incredibly challenging for me as a teacher in part due to the pandemic. Since 2020 challenging student behaviors have increased and we have seen a loss of learning that continues to affect students. The stress of worrying about my students' emotional wellbeing and learning has at times felt like too much to bear.

One of the things that has kept me teaching through these challenging times is knowing I have a pension when I retire. Unfortunately this is not true for many of my colleagues. Having a defined benefit system is critical for teacher recruitment and retention.

Please consider a return to a defined benefit system for teachers and state workers in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Allison Smith  
4500 Hillcrest Avenue  
Juneau, AK 99801

**From:** [Lara Applebaum](#)  
**To:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#); [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Support for SB 88  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 4:10:20 PM

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To the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee:

I am writing a letter of support for Senate Bill 88 to restore a retirement with dignity for public servants. As a career educator and single parent in the Anchorage School District, I devote my public service to our community, and yet I have the least secure retirement among educators in our country. This greatly concerns me as I plan for my and my daughter's future.

It also concerns me that this lack of a secure retirement system will continue to discourage the attraction of quality educators. We are experiencing a shortage of educators, who are the most important component in improving our state's educational system.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lara Applebaum

**From:** [Ginger Evens](#)  
**To:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**Cc:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** SB 88 - Support of  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 21, 2023 3:54:54 PM

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Honorable Senator Giessel,

Hello, my name is Virginia (Ginger) Evens and I am a retired educator and resident of Petersburg, Alaska.

I strongly support SB 88 and the return of a defined benefit system for all Alaska Public Employees, which includes teachers. Alaska needs to be able to attract public employees and teachers to Alaska and returning to a defined benefit system is an integral component to making Alaska an attractive place to work and live.

On a personal level, my son, Nels, graduated from Gonzaga with a degree in environmental science and his elementary education teaching credentials. Nels taught for a year in Bethel, AK then left Alaska because of the lack of a defined benefit system. Nels would love to return to Alaska; however, without a defined benefit system, he would rather teach elsewhere.

I fully support SB 88.

Sincerely,

Ginger Evens  
PO Box 585  
Petersburg, AK 99833

March 21, 2023

Senator Jesse Bjorkman  
Chair, Senate Labor and Commerce Committee  
Alaska Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Senator Bjorkman and members of the committee,

I am strongly in support of SB 88 Public Employees Defined Benefits.

As a retiree, I am appreciative of Alaskans before me who ensured that I would have a secure retirement. It's time for us to ensure today's public servants have a secure retirement.

Before I retired, I worked for one of the larger public employee labor unions, which represented members across the state working for school districts, municipalities, the university, and the state. My work put me in touch with countless public employees hired after 2006 who were dismayed to find they had very little to look forward to after retiring – or even if they would ever be able to retire. New employees found their accounts difficult to read and that financial growth was slow. Recruitment issues appeared early on as evidenced by reports from newly elected Governor Palin's transition team. Today, recruitment and retention has become a crisis as shown by the vacancy factors as well as the statistics on the out-migration of younger Alaskans.

My fellow retirees and myself help provide economic stability in Alaska and provide jobs to the retail, health, and hospitality sectors. We volunteer in our communities and make charitable contributions. We enjoy retirement. And we believe the next generation deserves a secure retirement.

Thank you for hearing SB 88 and I am hopeful it will pass out of your committee.

Cindy Spanyers  
Juneau, Alaska

**From:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**To:** [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Subject:** FW: \*\*\*Defined Benefits for All Public Employees\*\*\*  
**Date:** Thursday, March 23, 2023 6:48:34 AM

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**From:** Lori Johnson <[yukonjohnson@gmail.com](mailto:yukonjohnson@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 9:11 PM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** \*\*\*Defined Benefits for All Public Employees\*\*\*

**rom:** Johnson, Lori <[LJohnson@kpb.us](mailto:LJohnson@kpb.us)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 10:38:27 AM  
**To:** Miguel Rohrbacher <[mrohrbacher@apea-aft.org](mailto:mrohrbacher@apea-aft.org)>  
**Subject:** \*\*\*Defined Benefits for Public Employees\*\*\*

Hello – I would like to say that if given the choice I would much rather have the defined benefits package compared to the 401K that is now offered.

I've been in the public sector for over 15 years and it is a real shame to see my hard earned income disappear into thin air because of the stock market etc.

At least not to see my retire funds totally disappear, at least the monies I contributed over the years should always be there for me as I originally put in. I'm 50 now and at this rate of decline, I may never get to retire and that is pathetic if you ask me.

**PLEASE, CONSIDER BRINGING BACK THE DEFINED BENEFITS FOR ALL PUBLIC EMPLOYEES.**

THANK YOU!

Lori

Lori Johnson

Administrative Assistant

Finance Department

(907) 714-2197 direct

(907) 714-2376 fax

[ljohnson@kpb.us](mailto:ljohnson@kpb.us)

**From:** [jacquedean@aol.com](mailto:jacquedean@aol.com)  
**To:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#); [Julia OConnor](#)  
**Cc:** [Sen. David Wilson](#); [Rep. Jesse Sumner](#)  
**Subject:** SB88  
**Date:** Sunday, March 26, 2023 1:31:38 PM

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Senator Giessel,

I appreciate the proposed SB88 to restore a public pension plan for teachers and public employees.

I have been in Alaska for seven years, have thirty-one years of teaching experience, and know first hand how the current defined contribution plan without social security contributions is impacting the education of our children in our state. We are not able to recruit and retain exceptional teachers with this current plan. I have had at least a dozen coworkers at my high school alone in the Matsu Valley that have left the state for a better retirement system within the last two years. We can not expect teachers to stay in Alaska when studies show 75% of our teachers will run out of their retirement savings after 15-20 years of retirement after a 30-year career. The current plan drives teachers away from our state.

I appreciate the proposed SB88 and hope your colleagues will also support this for the future of education in Alaska. We need great teachers to have a reason to continue to teach in Alaska. This is a profession where experienced teachers make for a better educational system.

Jacqueline Cunningham  
Wasilla, Alaska



Honorable Cathy Giessel  
State Senator District E  
Capitol Room 427  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

March 22, 2023

Dear Senator Giessel,

The Executive Board and Members of the TOTEM Association of Educational Support Personnel wish to thank you for sponsoring Senate Bill 88. TOTEM represents educational and administrative support staff in the Anchorage School District including classroom paraprofessional educators pre-k-12, tutors, front office staff that includes Secretaries, Registrars, and Administrative Assistants in both schools and departments, all of whom are in PERS. With over 1,100 employees we are the largest school support staff union in Alaska. It is not hyperbole to say that without our members schools in Alaska would not be able to function. We resoundingly support restoring a defined benefit pension for public employees.

Our members work in schools because we care about the kids we serve. My own journey as a school support staff employee started twenty-six years ago as a volunteer in my own child's classroom and I've been working in education ever since, but sometimes the satisfaction that comes from working with kids and serving the public is not enough to keep our members in their jobs or attract new people to the field. Currently there are approximately 700 vacant school support staff positions across the state, including 350 in Anchorage alone. These vacancies are only growing.

It used to be that despite low wages many members stuck it out and worked full careers because they knew they would receive a pension in retirement. That made it worth it. Since 2006, that incentive is gone and as a result school support staff jobs have atrocious turnover. Our members are paid too little and many work second jobs on weekends, evenings, and on school breaks to make ends meet. Our lowest paid member makes \$14.79 an hour, and that's just for the school year, 9 months a year. That is not a living wage!

While we will continue to advocate and bargain for higher wages, we know that when it comes to a pension the district's hands are tied. As you know, the ability to restore the pension system for employees hired after 2006 rests with the legislature. **At the very least school support staff should be able to count on a pension, even a modest one, after working a full career in service to the public.**

Thank you for being a champion for a pension benefit. Please be assured of our support in this effort.

Respectfully,

*Sandy Thompson Wallace*

Sandy Thompson Wallace, CAP  
President

TOTEM Association of Educational Support Personnel, Inc. 6265

**From:** [Kemnitz Investments](#)  
**To:** [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**Cc:** [Julia OConnor](#); [Sen. Click Bishop](#); [Sen. Gary Stevens](#); [Sen. Jesse Kiehl](#); [Sen. Scott Kawasaki](#); [Sen. Bill Wielechowski](#); [Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson](#); [Sen. Forrest Dunbar](#); [Sen. Matt Claman](#)  
**Subject:** Support and Concern for SB 88  
**Date:** Friday, March 24, 2023 12:32:08 PM

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Good afternoon Senator Giessel,

My name is Alex Kemnitz, and I am writing to thank you for your incredible work on SB 88 and its informative presentation to the committee on 3/13/23. I have served in the Division of Forestry and Fire Protection for the last decade and have seen firsthand the high turnover and vacancy rates that our current retirement system has exacerbated, so I fully support the proposed changes to the benefit of both the employees and the state we serve.

I must voice my concern over one aspect of this bill though, as it will severely impact the viability of retirement for our Fire Program resources. Due to the seasonal nature of wildland firefighting, the vast majority of our employees hold permanent-seasonal positions, including our frontline firefighters, dispatchers, and support positions of every form. Though our demanding, high-stress jobs require us to work more hours than the average work-year in a shorter period, we only receive 'time in service' credit for the seasonal months we work, not for the years of dedication and commitment that the public needs from our services. Secondly, our Fire Protection Program is not recognized as a Public Safety component, making us ineligible for the retirement schedule offered to our fellow firefighters and peace officers.

The combination of these issues would force most of our employees to serve decades longer than our Public Safety counterparts to reach the time in service requirements laid out in SB 88, and if not addressed will likely resign our hardworking employees to remain in the broken Defined Contribution retirement plan. This will only further the recruitment and retention issues we struggle with year after year...

I have many coworkers that would like to express their support and interest in these issues, and we want to thank you again for your time and commitment to solving them!