

From: [Rick D](#)
To: [Azabel Ordaz](#)
Subject: Re: HB17 Testimony Not Showing
Date: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 8:16:42 AM

Azabel,
Thank you here is my public comments.

My name is Rick Dembroski and I am writing in support of HB17 and urging you to pass this piece of legislation that could be a life changing event for Service Connected Disabled Veterans such as myself. I have been a faithful employee with the Anchorage School District and now with the State of Alaska for a combined 23 years. I came to work under PERS when I first separated from the military and the disabilities that I endured while on active duty have progressed to the point I am now rated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) as "100% Permanently & Totally Disabled" AKA "100% P&T". It is important to remember that 100% P&T Veterans disabilities are "static" in nature meaning that even the DVA has said in accordance with Combined Federal Regulations (CFR 48 Part 4) and medical evaluations our conditions will never get better. As mentioned by Mr. Whisenhunt in his testimony in February 2025 when this bill was in the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, as disabled veterans age and our disability rating increases things like quality of life, and time we must take off of work to address medical conditions as a result of our military service injuries continue to plague us and diminish our quality of life. Yet we are unable to retire even apply for early and access our accrued retirement, this causes another layer of stress and reduction in our quality of life and adds to a general sense of dread about the future.

There are two parts to this legislation I would like to address, the first being the allowing of 100% P&T Veterans to retire before their "normal" retirement age. 100% P&T Veterans such as myself make up a small amount of the workforce that are PERS Tier 1, 2 or 3 (Retirement Tiers where the State of Alaska pays a traditional pension), and allowing the proposed changes to the State of Alaska Retirements and Benefits will not have a significant impact on the total amount paid out by PERS retirement. The DVA study that Mr Whisenhunt referenced is easy to find and is peer reviewed and considered a credible source of evidence for showing that disabled veterans in this class have a much shorter projected life span and an increased difficulty with living and financial stability as we age.

The second part of this proposed legislation is that passing this legislation will actually save the State of Alaska money in the short term and in the future. Allowing Tier 1,2&3 employees to retire under this program will stop these employees from continuing to accrue PERS retirement time which stops their retirement calculation and eventual benefit. Since Tier 3 ended in 2006 that would mean that at the shortest time of service effected employees by this legislation would have 20 + years in the PERS system. This means they are senior and compensated in a higher pay grade steps and higher leave time accrual than a new or replacement employee. When these employees are allowed to retire they are most likely to be replaced with Tier 4 employees that represent no long-term financial liability since they are on a 401K style pension and beyond the initial investment the state has no long-term pension liability. These new employees will most likely be compensated at a lower level due to their lack of years of state service.

Passing this legislation is a win-win situation for both the 100% Service Connected Disabled Veterans and the State of Alaska. It saves the state money in the short and long term and allows this effected class of employees to enjoy the retirement system they have contributed into.

v/R

Rick Dembroski