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**From:** Rick D [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 17, 2025 11:42 AM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** HB17 Written Testimony

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

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 22 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 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 I would like to address is the allowing of purchased PERS indebtedness of military time to count towards our "normal" retirement years calculations. Under PERS Tiers 1,2 & 3 an employee must either be aged 60 or have 30 qualifying years of service in PERS in order to retire, or retire early at age 55 in some conditions. Many qualifying Veterans such as myself may purchase (with interest) their military service time credit up to a maximum of 5 years credit. This time or credit is paid for by the member yet does not count towards the "normal" years calculation. This to me is preposterous, we voluntarily paid our money for the right to "credit" of our military time then it's not actually counted till the end as "bonus years" instead of normal years of service.

Passing this piece of legislation would provide 100% P&T Veterans such as myself an avenue to access our retirements which we have earned in a time when we need them most. We have been dedicated employees to the nation and now to the State of Alaska, will the state help us now find financial and mental stability as we age and continue to deal with these permanent disabilities or will it just turn a blind eye to our conditions ? This is the question before the committee and I urge you to pass this bill and

help make it the law of the State of Alaska, the state I chose to live in and happily work for more than 20 years.

If you have any questions I am available, Thank you all again for your service to our state and it's people

V/R

Rick Dembroski  
