

Konrad Jackson

From: Kelly McBride <kelbel78@live.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 2:03 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Subject: HB 78

Dear Members of the House Labor & Commerce Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 78: Retirement Systems; Defined Benefit Option. As an special education administrator in Alaska and parent of a Kindergarten student, I see firsthand how critical it is for our state to recruit and retain high-quality educators, specialists, and support staff. A competitive and stable retirement system is an essential component of that effort.

HB 78 would allow teachers and other public education employees to choose between a defined benefit or a defined contribution retirement plan. Restoring this choice is an important step toward rebuilding a sustainable and reliable workforce in our schools.

The current defined contribution structure has contributed to significant challenges in teacher retention. Many skilled educators leave Alaska after only a few years because the current system does not provide long-term security—particularly in a remote, high-cost, and difficult-to-staff state. When educators leave, communities lose experienced professionals, and students bear the impact through increased turnover, fewer qualified applicants, and fragmented program supports.

Providing a defined benefit option not only strengthens recruitment and retention but also aligns with broader state goals:

- Stability for Alaska’s schools and communities by retaining experienced educators.
- Reduced turnover costs associated with constantly rehiring and retraining staff.
- **Improved student outcomes** through consistent, high-quality instruction and services.

HB 78 offers a fiscally responsible path forward by giving educators a choice in the retirement pathway that best fits their circumstances. This flexibility helps Alaska remain competitive with other states that already offer defined benefit pensions, which are often a deciding factor for educators choosing where to teach and build their careers.

I respectfully urge your support for HB 78 and your continued commitment to strengthening Alaska’s public education system. Our students deserve the stability and expertise that only a well-supported, long-term educator workforce can provide.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to Alaska.

Kelly McBride