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ANCHORAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT



Ethan Berkowitz
Mayor

Headquarters
100 East 4th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Phone (907) 267-4936 / Fax (907) 267-4977



Jodie Hettrick
Fire Chief

January 11, 2019

Representative Chuck Kopp
Alaska State Capitol, Room 13
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Police and Fire Retirement Legislation

Dear Representative Kopp,

As you are aware, the Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) is the largest fire, EMS, and special rescue emergency response organization in Alaska. Approximately 40% of our current operations workforce belongs to the Tier IV retirement plan. By 2031 we expect close to 100% of that division to be in Tier IV.

While AFD has not experienced the degree of retention issues experienced by law enforcement post Tier IV implementation, we are seeing an increase in the number of departures compared to pre-Tier IV employees and expect this trend to continue. For example, in 2018 we were advised by our local bargaining unit that 18 of our Tier IV firefighters were actively testing with other fire departments in various states. That is unprecedented in the history of our department.

The per/capita rate for resignations to work for other departments is three times the rate of those prior to the implementation of the Tier IV plan. This equates to approximately \$1.5 million in lost investment in employee hiring, training, and experience each year. Our investment produces a high quality candidate which other departments are happy to hire.

The most significant impact of the Tier IV plan on AFD is in recruitment. In the 1990s-2000s, it was common to receive 800-1000 applications each time a test was announced. Since 2011 our applications have dropped to an average of 425, with only 305 received last year. This is most noticeable in the pool of licensed paramedics. We have had to modify our training program to send current employees to paramedic school. This increases our overtime costs significantly each year due to backfilling the positions vacated by employees in training for up to one year. AFD can no longer successfully compete with departments in other states for talented candidates when the retirement option is limited to the Tier IV plan.

Unless there is a significant change to the retirement system we expect the cost to the municipal tax payer to increase due to the higher attrition rate for Tier IV plan employees. For the long term health of the department and our ability to serve the citizens of Anchorage, a better option must be implemented.

Thank you for considering solutions which will save tax payer dollars in the long term and improve our ability to deliver high quality services to the community.

Jodie Hettrick
Fire Chief
Anchorage Fire Department
Hettrickjm@muni.org



*Ethan Berkowitz
Mayor*

ANCHORAGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Headquarters
4501 Elmores Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507-1599
Telephone (907) 786-8500 / Fax (907) 786-8638



*Justin Doll
Chief*

Representative Chuck Kopp
Alaska State Capitol, Room 13
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

January 9th, 2019

RE: Alaska Public Employee Retirement System

Dear Representative Kopp,

As Chief of Alaska's largest law enforcement agency, I am writing in strong support of amending the Alaska Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) to return public safety employees to a defined-benefit pension system. The return will help recruit new applicants and retain officers which will ensure Alaska residents have adequately staffed law enforcement agencies to mitigate their concerns for public safety.

Over the past three years the Anchorage Police Department (APD) has been fortunate to run consecutive police academies to rebuild the force after years of understaffing. During this process we faced an uphill battle to recruit new applicants and retain our extremely qualified officers due to Alaska's defined-contribution retirement system.

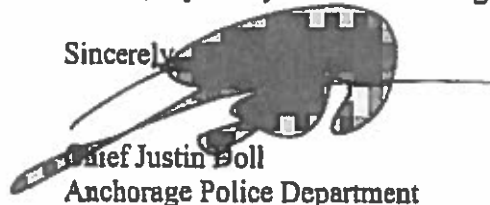
As applicants evaluate departments across the county, Alaska cannot compete with the agencies offering defined-benefit plans. This has left us with vacancies in multiple academies as applicants decide to pursue their careers elsewhere. For example, the last academy was short of our recruiting goal by about 10 recruits (about 35% less than our target).

Aside from difficulties in recruiting new applicants, we are seeing our highly-trained, qualified, and experienced officers leave APD to work out-of-state for other law enforcement agencies offering competitive defined-benefit retirement systems. We are paying the high cost of training these officers just to see them leave after a few years of valuable experience is gained.

The combination of recruiting shortfalls and inability to retain incumbent officers is a potential crisis for Alaska's public safety organizations. Making this change is a step in the right direction to help recruit and retain law enforcement officers. The Anchorage Police Department strongly supports this legislation and a return to a defined-benefit retirement system for Alaska's public safety employees.

I thank you for your support of law enforcement and public safety officials across the State of Alaska, especially here in Anchorage, and I urge you to present this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



Chief Justin Doll
Anchorage Police Department



FAIRBANKS POLICE
911 Cushman Street
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701-4616
Phone (907) 459-6500
Fax (907) 452-1588
Email - fpd@ci.fairbanks.ak.us

February 11, 2019

Representative Chuck Kopp
Alaska State Capitol, Room 13
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
RE: Alaska Public Employee Retirement System

Dear Representative Kopp,

As the Chief of the Fairbanks Police Department, I am writing to express my support of amending the Alaska Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) to once again make a defined-benefit pension available to public safety employees. The return to a defined-benefit system provides us with additional tools to recruit and retain officers. Having an adequately staffed department is the first step to providing public safety for our communities.

The Fairbanks Police Department struggles with recruiting and retaining officers more each year. We see our employees becoming more mobile and our qualified applicant pool shrinks each year. While this is a nationwide phenomenon, I believe our agency and Alaska has been particularly hit hard. Although our applicant pool continues to shrink, we remain loyal to our standards. I believe the expectations of police are at a all time high, so how do we attract people who are able to meet these expectations?

We are living in an age where vast employment information is available on a mobile device. Applicants are able to search and compare numerous agencies and make instant comparisons. We want our future officers to be forward thinking and look beyond simply getting a job. Today's applicants are doing just that; now we must be ready to give them something to look forward to and be competitive.

Returning public safety employees to a defined-benefit pension plan will hopefully assist your state and local agencies in attracting forward thinking, goal-oriented men and women. It will also assist in retaining these officers after we spend considerable time and money training them. Our goal is to provide a level of service and public safety our communities expect. This all starts with having the right people and giving them a reason to stay.

I thank you for your time and support of law enforcement and public safety in Alaska and I urge you to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Jewkes".

Eric Jewkes
Chief of Police



North Pole Fire Department

125 Snowman Lane - North Pole, Alaska 99705

Phone: 907.488.2232 Fax: 907.488.3747

Date: January 14, 2019

To: Representative Chuck Kopp
Alaska State Capitol, Room 13
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Subject: Police and Fire Retention Legislation

Representative Kopp,

This letter is in regards to the difficulties the North Pole Fire Department (NPF) has had in the hiring and retention of employees. Since 2006 when the State of Alaska changed its Defined-Benefit retirement system (Tiers 1-3) to a Defined-Contribution system (Tier 4), our department has had continual turnover in personnel. As a result, it is extremely difficult for a department of our size, which currently has 15 paid positions to maintain and keep employees.

Since the change in retirement system to Tier 4, our department has been unable to retain fully trained employees. Prior to Tier 4 our department was able to compete with other higher paying fire departments because we could offer the best retirement and benefit package. Having a good defined-benefit retirement is why numerous applicants have put in for our very few open positions. Giving up higher pay for a competitive retirement is what has kept long term employees with the department. Now firefighters are leaving after a couple of years of experience to other departments because they offer a better retirement.

2006 brought about a drastic change to the North Pole Fire Department. The department has hired, trained and lost 27 personnel to other positions inside and outside the fire service. The turnover is not just limited to the firefighters, senior members have also left for other positions that have a better retirement system. At this rate of turnover, we will have no members with the training or experience to take over when our last Tier 2 and 3 officers retire. On average employees are staying for two years gaining training and experience with our department before moving on. With it taking up to three months to advertise, interview and hire new employees, this leaves large parts of the year where the department is working with reduced staff.

Having a stable and reliable future retirement is of great importance to firefighters and the departments they work for. Thank you for your time and consideration into this very important matter that is affecting the State of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Geoff Coon, Fire Chief
City of North Pole Fire Department
gcoon@northpolefire.org

2575 Allen Adale Road
Fairbanks, AK 99709-2581

14 January 2019

The Honorable Representative Chuck Kopp
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Representative Kopp:

Thank you for sponsoring legislation to address the problem of Alaska's highly trained and experienced firefighters leaving Alaska for states with more attractive retirement plans. This legislation is needed to stem the out-migration of Alaska's firefighters. I am writing to you in support of this bill from my perspective as a fire chief that is highly involved in the fire service in Alaska and nationally.

I worked for about 26 years in the Anchorage Fire Department. For me and my contemporaries, getting hired at AFD was the ultimate achievement for an aspiring firefighter. Working in the largest fire department in the magnificent State of Alaska was the ultimate prize. In the latter part of my career at AFD, as a chief, I was astonished and alarmed to witness an increasing number of firefighters leaving the department for jobs Outside. These were firefighters - including long-time Alaskans - in whom we had invested over a year of intensive training and thousands of dollars in equipment. Based on statements they made, I attribute this to the implementation of the PERS Tier IV retirement plan. Once firefighters got off probation and started thinking about families and retirement, they began shopping around.

Through my involvement as an officer and President of the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association, I became aware that this phenomenon was occurring in fire departments throughout the state. The loss of experienced firefighters which departments had spent months recruiting and training is an even bigger burden to the smaller city and rural departments. For these, the loss of a single firefighter represents a significant financial and operational deficit, as they seek to recruit and retrain a replacement while maintaining adequate coverage to their communities.

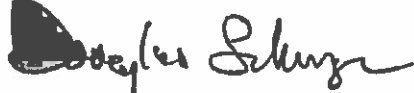
Currently, I operate a workforce development program for firefighters with an emphasis on higher education. Our firefighter alumni populate most Alaska career fire departments. The 42 young men and women in my program are far more aware of financial planning and retirement concerns than I was at their age. It is troubling that the majority of them are testing and interviewing for jobs in other states.

The fire departments in other states know this. In my travels and conversations as Immediate Past-President of the Western Fire Chiefs Association and as a Director for the International Association of Fire Chiefs, I have seen how departments throughout the West are increasingly offering lateral hiring -

avoiding the expense of training firefighters that other departments have already trained. These departments are actively recruiting in Alaska because of PERS Tier IV.

At a time when local budgets are strained, this problem takes on added emphasis. I thank you for working to solve this problem for our communities.

V/r,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas Schrage". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, dark, circular mark at the beginning, possibly a stylized "D" or a stamp.

Douglas Schrage

3/20/19

Representative Josh Revak
Alaska Representative District 25
State Capitol, Room 110
Juneau Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Josh Revak:

I am writing you in regards to a growing concern facing our public safety within the State of Alaska. As I am sure you are aware, over half of the current public safety workers within the state fall into the Tier IV retirement system. My current concern is that this retirement system is not competitive enough with local areas to retain the firefighters, police, State Troopers, and paramedics that were trained in this great state. This concern is shared by labor and management and has real financial consequences for the State and local municipalities in the form of recruitment and retention. The cost of training a new public safety member in the state is approximately \$190,000 which, in the past, was spread out over a 25-year career. We are now seeing our well-trained public safety members leave after 5 years and the money which could be used for training and equipment is now being used to recruit and train new officers. This also leaves our public safety departments with less experience as we continue to bring in newer members. This problem has been well stated by nearly every public safety department within the State and there is no sign of this trend reversing without action from the legislature.

Over the last 12 years we have worked to find a solution that solves the recruitment and retention crisis and also protects the State from an unfunded liability. With a conservative approach that offers a modest benefit we can attract and retain the best public safety workers. I encourage you to support House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to this growing problem and sets the State up to be competitive again. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your work in Juneau.

Sincerely

Crosby W. Hanson
Constituent District 25
Crosby.hanson@gmail.com 907-750-5495

To Whom It May Concern;

March 18, 2019

My name is Jeremy Struve. I am currently employed as law enforcement officer in the State of California and have been employed by my current department for ten years. I have always been interested in a position as an Alaska State Wildlife Trooper however; due to timing issues and the lack of a shortened lateral training program, prevented this dream from becoming a reality until now. I was recently advised by a friend and member of the Alaska State Troopers, that the lateral hiring process was back in place and I was eager to apply. Alaska DPS provides a wide array of law enforcement opportunities I do not have the ability to partake in with my current department, not to mention what the State of Alaska offers for my family to experience and enjoy.

While entertaining a department change my experience from the research has shown that other agencies and states are attempting to recruit high quality candidates due to their caliber of training, professional standards; and the type of experience they bring to the table to improve departmental efficiency and public service. As part of this recruitment, agencies are offering defined benefit retirements as a tool to entice these well qualified lateral applicants. I believed this would be the case in Alaska as well. However, when I began my research and began filling out my application for the Alaska State Troopers I was directed to the Tier IV retirement system by the recruitment unit.

As I did extensive research on the Tier IV retirement system I was forced to take a step back and identify if my dream was that, just a dream. I would be walking away from a defined benefit retirement system my current department offers of 3% at 50 years of age and lifetime medical after 20 years of service. I would forcing myself to work until Medicare eligibility age taking more time away from my family to maintain the same benefits I currently have. This is not healthy, physically or mentally for law enforcement officers as this profession is already stressful and taxing by nature and would be worse, having to work to age 60. Those who embark on a career in law enforcement for the most part do it because it is a calling, and do not expect anything in return. However a decent retirement which provides long term financial and medical stability is a nice reward at the end of a long career.

During my career in law enforcement, I have personally worked with about a dozen officers who have left my department for what they thought would be greener pastures only to return because they realized the struggles they would face in retirement without a defined benefit. While you may have been told the dollar cost to the State of Alaska to train new Troopers or bring in Laterals; what is not calculated is the years of experience that is lost when Troopers leave or Laterals select a different department with comparable benefits to what they are leaving behind or have lost. These employees are Field Training Officers, Pilots, Instructors, boat operators, Drug Recognition Experts, Accident Reconstruction experts, tactical team members, and potential future leaders in the Alaska law enforcement community. The financial and internal morale cost of losing out on these potential experienced employees is immeasurable.

After talking with the Alaska State Trooper Recruitment Unit, and a union representative I was advised of House Bill 79, the Hybrid Public Safety Retirement plan. Hearing of this bill brought a smile to my face as it gave me hope I might be able to make this transition work knowing there could possibly be a defined benefit retirement plan and I would not be giving up anything, while still providing for my family all while enjoying a continued career in law enforcement in the State of Alaska.

I urge you to support HB79's passage to return Alaska's public safety employees to a defined benefit retirement system. This will make Alaska competitive in recruitment and hiring of highly experienced and well trained lateral applicants, to serve the residents of the great State of Alaska.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Struve', written in a cursive style.

Jeremy Struve

3/19/2019

Dear Representative DeLena Johnson:

I am a constituent in your district and I work for The Anchorage Fire Department. I am writing you to discuss and inform you of the dire state of the PERS Tier 4 system. Over the last 10 plus years we have continually been working on coming up with a solution to fix the lack of defined benefit retirement for public safety employees. I truly feel that that House Bill 79 is the answer to that problem. This bill is being sponsored by Representative Chuck Kopp. The DPS did a study and summarized we are losing millions of dollars every year on public employee workers leaving the state, pre-retirement age, with over 70% leaving for somewhere else with a defined benefit retirement. I personally have lost two great friends to departments of the lower 48. I'm newly married, have a newborn son, and with potentially more cuts to education and state services and no defined benefit retirement, what keeps a young person like me, here anymore? I am at a point in my career that I am fully vested and am considering leaving but having a defined benefit retirement would be instrumental in my decision to stay here/

I am asking for your full support for this bill that will positively impact the state, the Anchorage Fire Department, and my family.

Thank you for your full support on this bill.

Sincerely,

Tyler Greensfelder

Constituent District 11

Tyler.greensfelder@hotmail.com

907-854-9857

3/20/2019

Representative DeLena Johnson
Alaska Representative District 11
State Capitol, Room 110
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative DeLena Johnson:

Good day. I am writing to you today to discuss my concerns with the current PERS TIER IV retirement system. I have been a Firefighter and member of the Anchorage Fire Department for nearly 12 years. I am in TIER IV and fear that the current retirement system is flawed and doesn't provide enough of a benefit to its employees. The truth of the matter is, with a quick glance at my TIER IV account it is hard to imagine it would even be half of what a retirement account should be by the time I hit retirement age.

Another consideration, public safety workers (Police Officers, State Troopers, and Firefighters) whom work on the line experience severe physical and mental burden over the course of a 25 year career. I fear that the current TIER IV members will be steered toward working LONGER careers because of not being in a financial position to retire, which could ultimately have disastrous physical and mental health consequences for our front line public safety personnel whom have worked so hard to protect the citizens of our great state.

I hope you would consider supporting House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to my concerns with the current TIER IV retirement system. Thank you for all of your hard work in Juneau.

Sincerely,



Brian Palmer
Constituent District 11
brianjpalm86@live.com
907-952-1745

Representative DeLena Johnson
Alaska Representative District 11
State Capitol Room 405
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Representative DeLana Johnson:

A concern I have and would like to bring to your attention is the Tier IV retirement system. Almost half of public safety workers fall within Tier IV now, and I believe it will not provide a suitable retirement after they have worked a full career. I am a firefighter and was hired in the first group that was hired in Tier IV. Throughout the last 11 years, I have witnessed fewer and fewer applicants for the fire department when it had been highly competitive. There is now a trend of public safety members leaving after 5 years of service and finding jobs outside of Alaska where the retirement system is more beneficial. Training a new public safety member is very costly and is about \$190,000 per member. Retention of public safety members in Alaska would be vital in saving money and keeping the experienced members in Alaska would be invaluable. House Bill 79 would help tremendously in making Alaska competitive in public safety. I would encourage you to support House Bill 79 because it's a solution to a growing problem and both sides benefit from it.

Thank you,

Adam Farrell
Constituent District 11
adam1188@hotmail.com
(907)355-1975

March 19, 2019

Nicholas Clark
249 Brighton Dr.
Fairbanks, AK 99709
aknickclark@gmail.com
907-750-1053

Representative Kopp
State Capitol Room 216
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Representative Kopp,

My name is Nick Clark and I am an Alaskan. I am a Firefighter/Paramedic for the Fairbanks Fire Department. I have been a firefighter at FFD for 6 years and 6 months, 10 years in the service total. In my 10 years, I have worked for an associate's degree in firefighting, paramedic school, paramedic certification, and countless hours in continuing education. I write to you today in support of HB 79.

My projected retirement for tier 4 is a meager 25% of what a firefighter who retires at 55 needs, and this is without health care costs. This figure is taking into account the market stays strong throughout. Furthermore, I cannot participate in SS, SBS, and contribute more to my tier 4 account. Here are some reasons why I support HB 79.

HB 79 is a good compromise and protects the state from pension spiking and underfunding. The DB plan will pool the risk among the employees, prevent pension spiking by excluding OT, sets minimum retirement age to 55 and 20 years of service, and employer contribution does not change. Again, this is a wonderful compromise for both sides.

I ask you support HB 79 for the State of Alaska and the members of the emergency service sector. In supporting this bill, the current tier 4 and future members can continue to work hard in their respective community without worrying about not having a sufficient retirement. Under the tier 4 system, my family and I will enter into retirement living on welfare if we do not change this inadequate system. If you have any questions or concerns, I would encourage you to write back. Thank you for your time and hard work for Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Nick Clark
Fairbanks Firefighter/Paramedic

Representative Kopp,

My name is Charles Renner and I am writing you in support of House Bill 79. I am a lifelong Alaskan who moved up here when I was just 1yr old and have lived here for 24 years. I love Alaska, I love the people, and I love all the opportunities there is here. However after working for the Fairbanks Fire Department for the past 5 years I have come to the realization that I cannot afford to retire in Alaska with our current retirement system. I have applied for jobs outside of Alaska and if this bill does not pass and our retirement system does not change, I will leave Alaska. Our current retirement system is not sufficient to be able to retire with any amount of stability even though I will have approximately 40 years of service as a firefighter when I hit retirement age.

I ask your support for HB 79 because Alaska needs to keep its public safety employees. Many fine men and women that I have worked with, went to school with at UAF, and trained with have left to the lower 48 because of our current retirement system. We need to keep our professionals and HB 79 would not only help keep our current Alaskans but attract other professionals as well.

Thank you,

Charles Renner

North Pole, AK

Dear Rep. Kopp

I write this letter urging you to support HB79, a proposed retirement plan aimed at keeping our talented first-responders in Alaska. A defined benefit plan will go a long way to make Alaska an attractive place to live and work, and will hopefully stem the mass exodus of Tier IV workers who are moving south for a more dependable retirement.

I am a Tier IV Alaska firefighter who lives and works in the city of Fairbanks. Many of my friends and former coworkers have made the difficult decision to leave Alaska permanently for jobs that offer a brighter, more sustainable future. At my fire department in particular, the average tenure of new Tier IV employees hired after 2006 is less than two years. This costs the state and municipalities more money in the long run. New firefighters are outfitted with turnout clothing and equipment, are trained and certified on the tax-payers' dime, and, on average, turn around and leave the state in less than two years.

I was born and raised in Juneau at Bartlett Regional Hospital and have lived in this great state ever since. I have lived in Fairbanks since 2003 when I moved up for college, earning my Bachelors degree from UAF. I have worked at the Fairbanks Fire Department since 2012 and my wife and I are expecting our first child in less than three months. I mention these life milestones to emphasize how deeply-rooted I am in Alaska. I would not be who I am today if not for the services and support of this great state and, conversely, Alaska would not be what it is today if not for hard-working people like me.

I humbly ask you to support HB79 for a brighter future for all Tier IV Alaska public safety professionals.

John Wagner
Fairbanks Fire Department
1101 Cushman St.
Fairbanks, 99701

To Representative Kopp,

I am writing to you in regards to HB79 and wanted to share with you my support for it from the perspective of a relatively young worker in Emergency Services in the great state of Alaska. My name is William Soen, a 25 year old with a wife and newborn, and have been happily employed as a City of Fairbanks Firefighter/Paramedic for 5 years and 3 years at the University Fire Department prior to that. I came from California to the University in hopes of gaining experience and returning to my home state. I, like many, fell in love with the state of Alaska and the warm community that Fairbanks provides, figuratively of course. When hired at Fairbanks Fire, the employees there had already seen so much turnover at the lower ranks, primarily Tier IV members, that one of the first things I was told was to either start looking elsewhere for a retirement or come to terms that I could be working past the point an Emergency Services employee should, age wise and to plan accordingly as we had no healthcare coverage. Prior to hearing of HB79, I and several employees were actively testing elsewhere, several having stated to me that they had one foot out the door. This is not a reflection of our workplace or community, as I have spoken to many who have left and state they miss the people and the state. It was more the fact that at 25 years of age or close to it, many with families, or even individuals, came to a crossroads of whether to continue putting into a defined contribution system with no certainty of retirement and a statistically high probability of injury or breakdown of the body over time, or to enter a defined benefits system where they could get enough time in still. Since I have been at Fairbanks in 2014, I was assigned an employee number of 77. This number is assigned to every employee chronologically by date of hire. We are into the 100s, have lost entire recruit classes to other states, some not even completing probationary period. We are a department of 40-45 people. This would be cause for concern in any sector. This community means so much to me, and my family and I would love nothing more than to be able to lay our roots down here. We have so much invested into the community already. Many of my coworkers and those I have spoken to around the state have taken pause in their searches elsewhere when word of HB79 came about. Many, including myself, are looking for every reason to stay and this would be a step in the right direction towards securing a healthy financial future both for workers and the state, not to mention peace of mind for many hard-working public safety employees and their families that give so much to the community. Thanks so much for your time and consideration and I look forward to the future that this state and its public safety employees could have.

Respectfully,

William Soen
City of Fairbanks Driver/Paramedic
Local 1324 Fairbanks Firefighters' Association

From: [Michael Wolcott](#)
To: [Rep. Chuck Kopp](#)
Subject: House Bill 79
Date: Thursday, March 21, 2019 8:46:48 PM

Dear Representative Chuck Kopp,

I would like to take a moment to ask for your support for House Bill 79. This bill aims to help all of Alaska by providing public safety workers a reason to work long careers and support their communities. By keeping the police and firefighters we have spent so much time and money training for an entire career, we will ensure a return on the state's investment. This will result in keeping masses of extremely qualified and experienced personnel.

Currently, with their Tier IV retirement, public safety employees are fully vested after only five years and have no further reason to stay. This causes a constant flow of workers to leave the state for better futures. Not only that, they cannot pay into social security. If they do happen to stay here, they have only their 8% contribution 401k that will leave masses of lifelong public safety employees unable to provide for their families in retirement. Simply put, this is an awful place for people to spend their career and our retention numbers prove it.

I encourage you to support House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to this growing problem and sets the State up to be competitive again. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your work in Juneau.

Sincerely,
Michael Wolcott
michaeljameswolcott@gmail.com
907-244-3424

March 19, 2019

Nicholas Clark
249 Brighton Dr.
Fairbanks, AK 99709
aknickclark@gmail.com
907-750-1053

Representative Kopp
State Capitol Room 216
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Representative Kopp,

My name is Nick Clark and I am an Alaskan. I am a Firefighter/Paramedic for the Fairbanks Fire Department. I have been a firefighter at FFD for 6 years and 6 months, 10 years in the service total. In my 10 years, I have worked for an associate's degree in firefighting, paramedic school, paramedic certification, and countless hours in continuing education. I write to you today in support of HB 79.

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I ask you support HB 79 for the State of Alaska and the members of the emergency service sector. In supporting this bill, the current tier 4 and future members can continue to work hard in their respective community without worrying about not having a sufficient retirement. Under the tier 4 system, my family and I will enter into retirement living on welfare if we do not change this inadequate system. If you have any questions or concerns, I would encourage you to write back. Thank you for your time and hard work for Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Nick Clark
Fairbanks Firefighter/Paramedic

Representative Kopp,

My name is Charles Renner and I am writing you in support of House Bill 79. I am a lifelong Alaskan who moved up here when I was just 1yr old and have lived here for 24 years. I love Alaska, I love the people, and I love all the opportunities there is here. However after working for the Fairbanks Fire Department for the past 5 years I have come to the realization that I cannot afford to retire in Alaska with our current retirement system. I have applied for jobs outside of Alaska and if this bill does not pass and our retirement system does not change, I will leave Alaska. Our current retirement system is not sufficient to be able to retire with any amount of stability even though I will have approximately 40 years of service as a firefighter when I hit retirement age.

I ask your support for HB 79 because Alaska needs to keep its public safety employees. Many fine men and women that I have worked with, went to school with at UAF, and trained with have left to the lower 48 because of our current retirement system. We need to keep our professionals and HB 79 would not only help keep our current Alaskans but attract other professionals as well.

Thank you,

Charles Renner

North Pole, AK

Dear Rep. Kopp

I write this letter urging you to support HB79 a proposed retirement plan aimed at keeping our talented first-responders in Alaska. A defined benefit plan will go a long way to make Alaska an attractive place to live and work, and will hopefully stem the mass exodus of Tier IV workers who are moving south for a more dependable retirement.

I am a Tier IV Alaska firefighter who lives and works in the city of Fairbanks. Many of my friends and former coworkers have made the difficult decision to leave Alaska permanently for jobs that offer a brighter, more sustainable future. At my fire department in particular, the average tenure of new Tier IV employees hired after 2006 is less than two years. This costs the state and municipalities more money in the long run. New firefighters are outfitted with turnout clothing and equipment, are trained and certified on the tax-payers' dime, and, on average, turn around and leave the state in less than two years.

I was born and raised in Juneau at Bartlett Regional Hospital and have lived in this great state ever since. I have lived in Fairbanks since 2003 when I moved up for college, earning my Bachelors degree from UAF. I have worked at the Fairbanks Fire Department since 2012 and my wife and I are expecting our first child in less than three months. I mention these life milestones to emphasize how deeply-rooted I am in Alaska. I would not be who I am today if not for the services and support of this great state and, conversely, Alaska would not be what it is today if not for hard-working people like me.

I humbly ask you to support HB79 for a brighter future for all Tier IV Alaska public safety professionals.

John Wagner
Fairbanks Fire Department
1101 Cushman St.
Fairbanks, 99701

To Representative Kopp,

I am writing to you in regards to HB79 and wanted to share with you my support for it from the perspective of a relatively young worker in Emergency Services in the great state of Alaska. My name is William Soen, a 25 year old with a wife and newborn, and have been happily employed as a City of Fairbanks Firefighter/Paramedic for 5 years and 3 years at the University Fire Department prior to that. I came from California to the University in hopes of gaining experience and returning to my home state. I, like many, fell in love with the state of Alaska and the warm community that Fairbanks provides, figuratively of course. When hired at Fairbanks Fire, the employees there had already seen so much turnover at the lower ranks, primarily Tier IV members, that one of the first things I was told was to either start looking elsewhere for a retirement or come to terms that I could be working past the point an Emergency Services employee should, age wise and to plan accordingly as we had no healthcare coverage. Prior to hearing of HB79, I and several employees were actively testing elsewhere, several having stated to me that they had one foot out the door. This is not a reflection of our workplace or community, as I have spoken to many who have left and state they miss the people and the state. It was more the fact that at 25 years of age or close to it, many with families, or even individuals, came to a crossroads of whether to continue putting into a defined contribution system with no certainty of retirement and a statistically high probability of injury or breakdown of the body over time, or to enter a defined benefits system where they could get enough time in still. Since I have been at Fairbanks in 2014, I was assigned an employee number of 77. This number is assigned to every employee chronologically by date of hire. We are into the 100s, have lost entire recruit classes to other states, some not even completing probationary period. We are a department of 40-45 people. This would be cause for concern in any sector. This community means so much to me, and my family and I would love nothing more than to be able to lay our roots down here. We have so much invested into the community already. Many of my coworkers and those I have spoken to around the state have taken pause in their searches elsewhere when word of HB79 came about. Many, including myself, are looking for every reason to stay and this would be a step in the right direction towards securing a healthy financial future both for workers and the state, not to mention peace of mind for many hard-working public safety employees and their families that give so much to the community. Thanks so much for your time and consideration and I look forward to the future that this state and its public safety employees could have.

Respectfully,

William Soen
City of Fairbanks Driver/Paramedic
Local 1324 Fairbanks Firefighters' Association

From: [Michael Wolcott](#)
To: [Rep. Chuck Kopp](#)
Subject: House Bill 79
Date: Thursday, March 21, 2019 8:46:48 PM

Dear Representative Chuck Kopp,

I would like to take a moment to ask for your support for House Bill 79. This bill aims to help all of Alaska by providing public safety workers a reason to work long careers and support their communities. By keeping the police and firefighters we have spent so much time and money training for an entire career, we will ensure a return on the state's investment. This will result in keeping masses of extremely qualified and experienced personnel.

Currently, with their Tier IV retirement, public safety employees are fully vested after only five years and have no further reason to stay. This causes a constant flow of workers to leave the state for better futures. Not only that, they cannot pay into social security. If they do happen to stay here, they have only their 8% contribution 401k that will leave masses of lifelong public safety employees unable to provide for their families in retirement. Simply put, this is an awful place for people to spend their career and our retention numbers prove it.

I encourage you to support House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to this growing problem and sets the State up to be competitive again. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your work in Juneau.

Sincerely,
Michael Wolcott
michaeljameswolcott@gmail.com
907-244-3424



Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police

Representative Kopp
Alaska State Capitol, Room 216
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

March 20, 2019

RE: Alaska Public Employee Retirement System & HB79

Dear REPRESENTATIVES KOPP, Shaw, LeDoux, Fields, Spohnholz

The Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police is an organization that represents the collective needs of many communities in Alaska. We are writing this letter in strong support of HB79 which amends the Alaska Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) to return ALL Police Officers/Troopers, state wide, to a defined-benefit pension system. This change will help with the recruitment of new applicants, retain officers and Troopers, and will ensure Alaska residents have adequately staffed law enforcement agencies to mitigate the concerns for public safety.

Over the past many years the Department of Public Safety AND local Police Departments in Alaska have been struggling to build and maintain their forces. During this process we have faced an uphill battle to recruit new applicants and retain extremely qualified Officers and Troopers. A lot of this is due to the Alaska's defined-contribution retirement system.

As applicants evaluate departments across the country, Alaska cannot compete with agencies offering defined-benefit plans. This has left all of us with vacancies when applicants decide to pursue their careers elsewhere. For example, the North Pole Police Department has struggled for over eight months to find one qualified applicant. Other agencies, like APD are struggling to fill their police academies. In the most recent academy, APD recruitment fell 35% below their target, leaving 10 unfilled slots. The Fairbanks Police Department is losing officers as fast as they can hire them. These are just a few stories of the difficulties every agency in the state is facing.

Aside from difficulties in recruiting new applicants, we are all seeing our highly-trained, qualified, and experienced officers leave agencies to work out-of-state for other law enforcement agencies offering competitive defined-benefit retirement systems. We are all paying the high cost of training these Officers/Troopers just to see them leave after a few years of gaining valuable experience.

The combination of recruiting shortfalls and inability to retain incumbent officers is a potential crisis for ALL of Alaska's public safety organizations. Making this change is a step in the right direction to help recruit and retain law enforcement officers across the state. The Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police strongly supports HB79 so we can return ALL Police Officers and Troopers to a defined-benefit retirement system.

PO Box 3734 Seward, Alaska 99664

We thank you for your support of law enforcement and public safety officials across the State of Alaska, and I urge you to present this legislation.

If you should have questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at EJewkes@fairbanks.us or at (907)450-6500.

We appreciate your service to the State of Alaska and concern for our citizens.

With Sincere Regards,



Eric Jewkes
Chief of Police, Fairbanks Police Department
President
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police



Tim Putney
Chief of Police, Kodiak Police Department
Treasurer
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police



Barry Wilson
Colonel, Alaska State Troopers
Board Member
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police



Ed Mercer
Chief of Police, Juneau Police Department
Board Member
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police



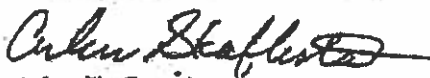
Steve Dutra
Chief of Police, North Pole Police Department
Secretary
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police



Thomas Clemons
Chief of Police, Seward Police Department
General Chair
International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)



Peter Mlynarik
Chief of Police, Soldotna Police Department
Board Member
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police



Arlen Skaflestad
Lieutenant, Yakutat BPD
Board Member
Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police

Cc: Senators Coghill, Bishop, Kopp

Dear Representative Chuck Kopp,

I'm writing to you today in regards to HB79 and the importance of it passing in the near future.

I moved to Alaska from Colorado to go to school at UAF and be a part of the fire science program with the University Fire Department. It was this great opportunity that brought me to Alaska from my Home. Six years later, I have made Alaska my new home. During my journey in the public service profession, one very common piece of advice that I have been given by other members in the public service profession is "find a public service career in the lower 48 with a better retirement". The fact is that Alaska's public safety retirement in comparison to much of America's Northwest is essentially non-existent. The statistics speak for themselves as public safety employees are abandoning Alaska's retirement to a state with a better retirement. I have personally seen a friend that grew up in Alaska and served Alaska's public safety system leave to another state's public safety system for a better retirement. Hearing back from him on how bright his future sounds makes me deeply consider doing the same. I hope that you will consider placing your support into the passing of HB79 and make an enormous step in giving back to the public service employees of Alaska.

Thank you,

Adam Biernat
Anchorage Resident
(719) 660-9403

3/21/19

Representative Chuck Kopp
Alaska Representative District 24
State Capitol, Room 216
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Chuck Kopp,

I write to you today to express my concerns and those of my fellow public safety employees regarding the problems with the PERS Tier IV retirement plan. Tier IV is a flawed plan and needs to be fixed. House Bill 79 is the fix we need to make.

I have been a firefighter 10 years, the last 6 of which I have had the privilege to work for the Anchorage Fire Department. I started my career while a student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. There, I met dozens of fellow aspiring firefighters from both in and out of state. Since then, most of those who came from Outside have found careers Outside. Many of my Alaskan friends have found careers Outside. As for myself, I *want* to live, work, and play here in Alaska, but every couple months, I find myself perusing job postings for fire departments with defined benefit retirement systems. In short, there is absolutely truth in the claims that Alaska is losing Alaskan-trained firefighters, and the same goes for police officers, troopers, and other first responders. Tier IV is not enough to entice people to stay in Alaska.

Since the inception of PERS, roughly every ten years has marked the change from one tier to the next. It has been over ten years since Tier IV started and we are beyond due for change. There is a fear out there that returning to a defined benefit pension system is unsustainable or too costly. That may be true for a private sector business, where the business must maintain success in perpetuity for a pension fund to survive. However, public safety is just that: public. We as a state will *always* need first responders and we will always have first responders. Every new hire would mean more contributions to a pension fund that sustains itself and the known, defined benefit at the end of a career would encourage employees to stay in Alaska. It would make Alaska a competitive employer again.

I want to live in Alaska. I want to provide for my family. I want to serve the community that has always been my home. I want to be able to retire at the end of my career with financial security that I worked hard to earn. That is why I write to you today. That is why I ask that you to please support House Bill 79.

Thank you for reading this, and for your service in Juneau,

Cole Crockett
Constituent District 14-G
colecrockett90@gmail.com
907-748-6736

From: [Fellman, Matthew J.](#)
To: [Rep. Chuck Kopp](#)
Subject: HB 79
Date: Friday, March 22, 2019 10:26:04 AM

Representative Chuck Kopp,

I'm writing to you today in regards to HB79 and the importance of it passing in the near future. As someone who has worked as an Alaskan firefighter over the last several years, I have become very familiar and therefore concerned regarding my future. Alaska is where I was born, raised, and a place that I love to call home. However, even though Alaska is dear to my heart I would be lying if I said that I haven't actively been searching and putting applications into departments within the lower 48 to work for the extended future. The fact is that Alaska's public safety retirement in comparison to much of America's Northwest is essentially non-existent. Although I hate thinking about it, there will come a day that my body, mind, and ability to perform as a firefighter/paramedic will come to an end sooner than my ability retire will. The statistics speak for themselves as public safety employees are abandoning Alaska's retirement to greener pastures and I have seen this firsthand during my career in Alaska. Unless something is changed in the near future, I will be forced to look out for my best interest and hop on that same wagon out of town. I hope that you will consider placing your support into the passing of HB79 and make an enormous step in giving back to the public safety employees of Alaska.

Thank you,

Matt Fellman- Anchorage Fire Department
(907) 953-4515

**Representative Andy Josephson
Room 102 Capitol Bldg.
Juneau, AK 99801**

Representative Andy Josephson,

My name is Eric Gallagher and I am an 8-year member of Anchorage Fire Department, serving as a firefighter/paramedic. I started my firefighter experience as a volunteer firefighter in Chugiak Alaska while taking a few college courses in hopes of finding a career to pursue. It wasn't long before I realized I wanted to work in firefighting/EMS full time. I went to paramedic school and soon after completion the Anchorage Fire Department hired me.

It's been almost 8 years since then and the training I've received has exceeded my expectations. It has taken many years of this training to build my confidence and skills to the level I am at today. It is through the combined experience of responding to many critical calls and the unique trainings with AFD that I now understand how much time it takes to develop a quality, competent employee in the field of public safety.

One thing that has been of concern in my short career is the idea of long-term financial security. Before joining AFD I had no training or encouragement in matters of financial planning. The Local 1264 and State Fire Association have been phenomenal about opening our eyes to the reality of a defined contribution system. They have taught us that in order for a chance at having the ability to retire we have few options. People are either maxing out their 457/451 accounts or are investing their money aggressively elsewhere (financial, housing, etc.). Given the fact that these investments are a risk and their production unknown, many of us are asking what else we can do to set ourselves up for long-term financial security.

At this time more than half of the Anchorage Fire Department falls into Tier 4 retirement. As we become increasingly aware of the lack of financial security in the current system there are many of us that feel led to begin looking at outside opportunities that can provide that security. I believe that the exodus of public safety employees can be mitigated with the current House Bill 79. I've lived in Alaska nearly all of my life and working for AFD is my dream job, but reality is that the current retirement system is not competitive enough to keep me here. Longevity in our line of work is always a huge question mark and I need to do what's best for my future and establish long-term security.

I sincerely thank you for taking the time to read my letter. Regards,

Eric Gallagher
Constituent District 17
Gallagher.eric4@gmail.com

3/23/2019

Representative Chuck Koop
Alaska Representative
Juneau Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Kopp:

I would like to discuss a growing concern for public safety within the State of Alaska. As you know, nearly half of public safety workers now fall into the Tier IV retirement system. My concern is that this retirement system will not provide an adequate retirement for our frontline public safety workers including firefighters, police officers, and State Troopers. This concern is shared by labor and management and has real financial consequences for the State and local municipalities in the form of recruitment and retention. The cost of training a new public safety member in the state is approximately \$190,000 which, in the past, was spread out over a 25-year career. We are now seeing our well-trained public safety members leave after 5 years and the money which could be used for training and equipment is now being used to recruit and train new officers. This also leaves our public safety departments with less experience as we continue to bring in newer members. This problem has been well stated by nearly every public safety department within the State and there is no sign of this trend reversing without action from the legislature.

Over the last 12 years we have worked to find a solution that solves the recruitment and retention crisis and also protects the State from an unfunded liability. With a conservative approach that offers a modest benefit we can attract and retain the best public safety workers. I encourage you to support House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to this growing problem and sets the State up to be competitive again. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your work in Juneau.

Sincerely,

Beau Gehler
Anchorage AK
206-981-7978

3/16/2019
Representatives Chuck Kopp
And Ken Truitt
Alaska Representatives
Juneau Alaska 99801

Dear Representatives Chuck Kopp and Ken Truitt:

I would like to express to you both how important it is to tier iv public employees that Alaska needs to change the tier iv retirement system. I was hired at AFD in 2007, the first group hired under the new tier iv retirement. At the time it was the first job I'd ever had where a retirement was offered, so I was happy just to have something. As the years have gone by I've watched many great employees here at AFD leave to pursue a career where a real retirement is offered. And as time has gone by I've realized that tier iv really isn't a retirement, it's money collecting interest in an account that could be gone tomorrow. Or worse, it could be gone the day before I am to retire. In my 12 years here I have seen multiple attempts by multiple people to get this broken system changed, or fixed. It's never happened, honestly I don't think it's ever even come close to succeeding. If nothing else I feel that that many people trying to change one thing should say something. Our current retirement system is broken and ineffective. It offers no guarantees and no promise of a retirement. As a state we can hardly hold onto police officers or fire fighters in this city, or troopers around the state. They hire on to get very expensive and very good training, then they leave for departments around the country that offer a real form of retirement. I strongly encourage you both to support House Bill 79 which offers a reasonable solution to this problem and it sets our state up to be competitive with other states. Thank you for your time and your work in Juneau.

Sincerely,

Jeremiah Gilliland
Constituent District 25
jerry_g21@hotmail.com
907-240-1770

3-20-2019

Representative Sara Rasmussen

Alaska Representative District 22

State Capitol Room 430

Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Representative Sara Rasmussen,

I am writing you today to express a growing concern for public safety within the State of Alaska. As I'm sure you are already aware, nearly half of Alaska's public safety personnel fall in the Tier IV retirement system. The numbers of Tier IV do not lie, and I am extremely concerned that its inadequacies will negatively impact the lives of firefighters, police officers, and state troopers alike.

The Tier IV system provides both inadequate retirement benefits and leads to uncertainty of public safety professionals, and this same uncertainty is causing employees to seek employment out of state. Public safety employees are able to find jobs in the lower 48 with comparable pay, benefits, and a defined benefit retirement system. I often find myself wondering why I should stay here and question my well-being in retirement, when I could find employment out of state that pays the same and provides myself and my family a defined benefit plan.

In light of this, I want to take this opportunity to give you my own personal experience with the Tier IV retirement system. I have been planning and saving for retirement since I was first hired as a firefighter. I was fortunate to work with individuals who brought the facts of Tier IV to me early in my career, and I have since saved aggressively in an effort to overcome the inadequacies of Tier IV. Despite opening additional retirement savings accounts and putting a very large portion of my income towards retirement, I am frequently reminded that it is simply not enough. I have done the research, used the retirement calculators, and met with financial advisors. They all tell me the same thing: it's not enough. I am in a position where I literally cannot put any more money into retirement without compromising paying my bills. Your initial thought might be that I am living beyond my means but, the people around me will be the first to tell you that is not the case. I live in an average single family home, I don't spend a ton of money on frivolous things and I've never been on a vacation. Whatever extra money I have has gone right into retirement.

On an even more personal level, I am going to be married here in a couple months. My soon to be wife and I are discussing the possibility of starting a family. We are honestly having to have the conversation of whether we can afford to have kids because of how much money we need to contribute to retirement. It doesn't seem right to me that we should have to choose between those two things but, that is the reality of Tier IV for us. We are having to choose between having children, or the possibility of retiring one day.

With all that being said, please ask yourself this. Would you stay in the state if you were in this position? Would you stay here if you knew that there were jobs out of state offering comparable pay AND a defined benefit retirement plan? I find I'm asking myself these questions every day. It's a tough

pill to swallow. I am a born and raised Alaskan and don't want to have to leave my family and the Alaskan life that I have grown to love.

There is a solution that has been in the making for 12 years now. House Bill 79 offers a solution through a conservative approach and a modest benefit. It's the solution to the problems like my own that many other public safety employees are faced with. I ask that you please support House Bill 79 so that we can fix the inadequacies of the Tier IV system. Doing this will give public safety families the confidence in their future and in addition, drastically increase retention of our highly trained public safety personnel. Thank you for your consideration. I cannot express how much your efforts on this issue mean to us.

Sincerely,

Cameron Gregg

Anchorage Firefighter Local 1264

cp.gregg23@gmail.com

907-947-1299

3/24/2019

Representative Chuck Kopp Alaska Senate District 24 State Capitol, Room 110 Juneau Alaska 99801

Representative Kopp:

I have never written to a politician before but there is currently a bill in Juneau that is important to myself, as a Paramedic/Firefighter, and many others who serve the public on a daily basis. House Bill 79 (HB 79) is the result of 12 years of work to fix a retirement system for public safety workers. Nearly half of public safety workers now fall into the Tier IV retirement system that lacks a defined benefit structure. This retirement system does not provide an adequate retirement for frontline public safety workers including firefighters, police officers, and State Troopers. This failing has real financial consequences for the state and local municipalities in the form of recruitment and retention.

The cost of training a new public safety member in the state is approximately \$190,000. In the past, this cost was spread out over a 25-year career. Currently our well-trained public safety members leave Alaska after just 5 years of service. This means that money which could be used for training and equipment is now being used to recruit and train new officers. Public safety departments now have less combined experience as they are forced to continually bring in and train new members. Without action from the legislature this problem, that affects nearly every public safety department within the state, will continue unabated.

HB 79 has the potential to stem the recruitment and retention crisis while also protecting the state from unfunded liability. It offers a conservative approach with modest benefits. These benefits will allow public safety departments throughout the state to attract and retain the best public safety employees possible. Public safety is a cause that affects every Alaskan. Having well-trained and experienced public safety employees benefits everyone. A defined retirement is a key factor for public safety employees who often have shorter careers due to the physical and emotional stressors of our jobs. I encourage you to support House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to this growing problem and sets Alaska up to be a competitive recruiter of top public safety candidates again.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Jeff Hall

Constituent District 24 Jeffscotthall76@gmail.com

From: Max Harvey <harvak907@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 23, 2019 1:02 PM
To: Rep. Chuck Kopp <Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov>
Subject: TIER IV Retirement

Dear Representative Chuck Kopp,

I would like to discuss a growing concern for public safety within the State of Alaska. As you know, nearly half of public safety workers now fall into the Tier IV retirement system. My concern is that this retirement system will not provide an adequate retirement for our frontline public safety workers including firefighters, police officers, and State Troopers. This concern is shared by labor and management and has real financial consequences for the State and local municipalities in the form of recruitment and retention. The cost of training a new public safety member in the state is approximately \$190,000 which, in the past, was spread out over a 25-year career. We are now seeing our well-trained public safety members leave after 5 years and the money which could be used for training and equipment is now being used to recruit and train new officers. This also leaves our public safety departments with less experience as we continue to bring in newer members. This problem has been well stated by nearly every public safety department within the State and there is no sign of this trend reversing without action from the legislature.

Over the last 12 years we have worked to find a solution that solves the recruitment and retention crisis and also protects the State from an unfunded liability. With a conservative approach that offers a modest benefit we can attract and retain the best public safety workers. I encourage you to support House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to this growing problem and sets the State up to be competitive again. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your work in Juneau.

Sincerely,

-Max Harvey

Dear Representative Chuck Kopp,

I am writing you in regards to the retirement our current Tier IV public safety employees are receiving. My dad did over 40 years with the Anchorage Fire Department and it was a dream for me to work for AFD and to follow in his footsteps. I love Alaska, it's my home, it's where I was raised, started my family, and want to raise my family. With the current retirement system we have in place I have been actively seeking employment for another fire department outside the State of Alaska, one that offers a defined benefit plan specifically. Our current Tier IV system is going to force me sooner rather than later, to leave the state I grew up in and the department I truly want to work for. This decision is unfortunate but it is one I have to make to support myself and family after retirement.

Not only is the retirement system a concern to me but it's bad for our state as well. Soon, if not already, a majority of our public safety employees will be Tier IV members. I know a number of AFD and APD employees who are actively seeking employment outside of the state to get a better retirement. With the average cost to train a public safety worker being \$190,000, seeking a better retirement system to help with retention of our Tier IV employees is a must. I strongly encourage the legislature to support HB79 and get this bill passed.

Thank you for your time,
Brian Kneaper

Dear Representative Chuck Kopp-

As a former State of Alaska employee, I was a the crew leader of one of the Division of Forestry's hotshot crews, of 17 years I have been on the front lines of the negative impacts of our current Tier IV retirement system. I originally hired, as a permanent employee, in 2006. This was my fifth summer working for the DOF. At that time permanent positions were extremely coveted. To work five years as temporary employee was normal because no one felt they could receive a better wages, health insurance and retirement "package" elsewhere. After the implantation of Tier IV it became very obvious people felt they could go elsewhere and receive a better package. Those same jobs which people had to wait five years for were now being distributed to personnel after one to two years. Statewide the impacts of the lack of ability to recruit and retain have been felt throughout the Division of Forestry.

To the uneducated person this may not seem to be a big deal. However, those personnel, like myself, who have the experience and responsibility to efficiently and cost effectively use the retardant airplanes, helicopters, heavy equipment and the other costly wildland firefighting tools have the experience to utilize those tools in a safe, efficient manner. These younger, inexperienced personnel are learning on the job, without adequate training, and making costly mistakes at the expense of the average Alaskans pocketbook. Not only fiscally but in a safety sense, which costs money also.

I realize you have thought extensively about Tier IV and Tier V. Many would save the State money to not have a defined contribution system for retirement. Those same people do not realize how mobile and quickly the Tier IV employee is. As people leave the system they incur costs for our departments. Training new employees, making mistakes due to lack of experience, spending time and money to hire new employees and outfitting employees with gear. These are just the tip of the iceberg. Training and qualifications could be talked about extensively.

Initially this all sounds daunting to overcome but the first step you can take to help our great State become "healthy" again is to support HB 79. Thanks for the work you are doing in Juneau and take care.

Josh Leutzinger

9073019490

Dear Representative Chuck Kopp,

Please continue to push for better retirement options for public safety in Alaska. I have been in emergency services since I was in high school and plan on retiring from this wonderful field. The big question is if it will be from the department I love in Anchorage. The poor retirement of Tier four has left doubt if this is the place my family will put our roots. With other departments out of state offering much better options it is hard to stay.

Over the last 12 years we have worked to find a solution that solves the recruitment and retention crisis and also protects the State from an unfunded liability. With a conservative approach that offers a modest benefit we can attract and retain the best public safety workers. I encourage you to support House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to this growing problem and sets the State up to be competitive again. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your work in Juneau.

Sincerely,

Chris Ling
907-887-6000

3/16/2019

Representative Josh Revak
Alaska Representative District 25
State Capitol, Room 110
Juneau Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Josh Revak:

I would like to discuss a growing concern for public safety within the State of Alaska. As you know, nearly half of public safety workers now fall into the Tier IV retirement system. My concern is that this retirement system will not provide an adequate retirement for our frontline public safety workers including firefighters, police officers, and State Troopers. This concern is shared by labor and management and has real financial consequences for the State and local municipalities in the form of recruitment and retention. The cost of training a new public safety member in the state is approximately \$190,000 which, in the past, was spread out over a 25-year career. We are now seeing our well-trained public safety members leave after 5 years and the money which could be used for training and equipment is now being used to recruit and train new officers. This also leaves our public safety departments with less experience as we continue to bring in newer members. This problem has been well stated by nearly every public safety department within the State and there is no sign of this trend reversing without action from the legislature.

Over the last 12 years we have worked to find a solution that solves the recruitment and retention crisis and also protects the State from an unfunded liability. With a conservative approach that offers a modest benefit we can attract and retain the best public safety workers. I encourage you to support House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to this growing problem and sets the State up to be competitive again. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your work in Juneau.

Sincerely,

Justin Mack
Constituent District 25
justinmack@me.com
907-947-1082

From: [Joey and Cami McGhee](#)
To: [Rep. Chuck Kopp](#)
Subject: HB79
Date: Monday, March 25, 2019 9:56:01 PM

Two Whom It May Concern,

My name is Joe McGhee and I have spent the last eight years working for the Anchorage Fire Department as a Firefighter Paramedic. I'm writing this letter to encourage your support on House Bill 79.

I want to retain the quality of EMS in our system. What I mean by that is that the Anchorage Fire Department out-of-hospital care is significantly better than the large majority of the cities and states in the lower 48. Our city has been recognized and awarded as one the best places in this country to have a Heart attack in. Why? This is due in part from a very aggressive Medical Director and medic program that, coupled with an average of 40,000 calls year, gives us the experience and education to remain leader in EMS throughout the country. However, due to the national recognition other departments in the lower 48 started recruiting from Alaska. Most offering competitive or better pay with full pensions and medical after retirement. I've personally received these letters at home. Furthermore, the trend I've seen in the last 2 years is leaders and older fireman encouraging young firefighters to pursue these lateral opportunities to other departments to secure a better future for their families. As a result we are seeing our talented firefighters leave and with them the experience and \$100,000 + dollars in training they have received. This is a critical mistake that is weakening our department. Additionally, AFD is drawing in less applicants for testing due to the lack of benefits. Prior to the implementation of Tier 4, we would have up to 3,000 applicants testing to join this department. Now? I believe the last academy had only 300 applicants. Thus not drawing the best applicants throughout our state and country.

Bottom line is that the Anchorage Fire Department needs it's pension back to keep our employee's here. We are bleeding our talent to other states and paying the bill for their training.

Respectfully,

Joe McGhee

To whom it may concern,

I have been a member of the Anchorage Fire Department for three years. I am proud to serve my community and have strong family ties to public safety. My father worked for the Anchorage Fire Department for 27 years and my grandfather served in the Saskatoon Police Department for over 30 years. Both my father and grandfather served their respective communities with peace of mind knowing that they would be taken care of in retirement. Under the current State of Alaska Tier IV retirement system I can not provide that security for myself and family.

I grew up in Anchorage and I enjoy the outdoor activities and people this state has to offer. There is no other place my wife and I would rather raise our growing family. However, under the current retirement system it is very hard for me to not consider leaving Alaska. Other fire departments are offering a defined pension and medical in retirement. I am forced to choose between living in the place I love and providing a certain future for myself and family. I only ask that after a long career of putting my health on the line for this community that I will be financially secure in retirement just as my father and grandfather.

Thank you for your time,

Bryant Molle

3/24/2019

Representative Chuck Kopp
Alaska Representative District 24
State Capitol, Room 216
Juneau Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Kopp:

I appreciate you taking the time to co-sponsor the bill to help address the problem of public safety retirement in Alaska. As you know, nearly half of public safety workers now fall into the Tier IV retirement system, myself included.

My concern is that this retirement system will not provide an adequate retirement for our frontline public safety workers including firefighters, police officers, and State Troopers. Because of this, just about every Tier 4 member I know has been looking to move out of state in order to find a department with a defined benefit retirement.

This problem has been well stated by nearly every public safety department within the State and there is no sign of this trend reversing without action from the legislature.

Thank you for your support of House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to this growing problem and sets the State up to be competitive again. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your work in Juneau.

Sincerely,

Jacob Sedlacek

From: Trey <treyschafer@gci.net>
Sent: Saturday, March 23, 2019 11:19 AM
To: Rep. Chuck Kopp <Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 79

Dear Representative Chuck Kopp,

I would like to discuss a growing concern for public safety within the State of Alaska. As you know, nearly half of public safety workers now fall into the Tier IV retirement system. My concern is that this retirement system will not provide an adequate retirement for our frontline public safety workers including firefighters, police officers, and State Troopers. This concern is shared by labor and management and has real financial consequences for the State and local municipalities in the form of recruitment and retention. The cost of training a new public safety member in the state is approximately \$190,000 which, in the past, was spread out over a 25-year career. We are now seeing our well-trained public safety members leave after 5 years and the money which could be used for training and equipment is now being used to recruit and train new officers. This also leaves our public safety departments with less experience as we continue to bring in newer members. This problem has been well stated by nearly every public safety department within the State and there is no sign of this trend reversing without action from the legislature.

Over the last 12 years we have worked to find a solution that solves the recruitment and retention crisis and also protects the State from an unfunded liability. With a conservative approach that offers a modest benefit we can attract and retain the best public safety workers. I encourage you to support House Bill 79 which offers a practical solution to this growing problem and sets the State up to be competitive again. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter and for your work in Juneau.

Sincerely,

Robert Shafer
Chugiak, Ak
907 244-3210