

From: landonforth@gmail.com
To: [Rep. Neal Foster](#); [Rep. Tammie Wilson](#); [Rep. Jennifer Johnston](#); [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Andy Josephson](#); [Rep. Gary Knopp](#); [Rep. Bart LeBon](#); [Rep. Cathy Tilton](#); [Rep. Kelly Merrick](#); [Rep. Colleen Sullivan-Leonard](#); [Rep. Ben Carpenter](#); [Rep. Chuck Kopp](#)
Subject: HB79
Date: Monday, May 6, 2019 8:50:39 AM

To my honorable representatives,

I am writing in support of House Bill 79.

My name is Landon Forth. I am a life long Alaskan, born and raised in Anchorage. I am 48 years old, a father of three children, and married to another true Alaskan.

Together, we have chosen to call this our home. Our hope is to raise our children to love Alaska as we do, and to consider raising a family here as we have.

I have served in the military, ran my own construction company, and currently work as a Captain with the Anchorage Fire Department. I am writing you in concern of our current Tier IV retirement system. Along with 31 others, I was in the first AFD hire group under the Tier IV system.

To be clear, I love my job and the citizens we serve. I have been fortunate to have worked with some of the finest human beings on earth, and the AFD has been no exception.

By now, over half of my colleagues are Tier IV employees. Over the past several years, many of my coworkers have discussed testing for other professional departments in the Lower 48. Departments that offer defined benefits (DB), a retirement system. Several of them have tested, several have already left, several more are testing currently.

Tier IV retirement is several things, what it is not is a long term solution to future of our state. My city is spending millions on recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development. In many cases creating a "fish in a barrel" environment, a training camp for competitive departments outside (offering DB) to snipe from. All at the expense of our citizens and their tax dollars. I am speaking of AFD, APD, and several other professional union work groups within our state.

Let's face the facts. Alaska is an expensive place to live, work and play. The Alaskan spirit is alive and well, but finances do matter. Of my hire group of 31, one left the job after just 5 years to become a school counselor (out of state with DB) and another is leaving for a better retirement (DB). Two others have left as well (DB). And that's just my hire group. I believe as many as 20 employees tested for other fire departments (DB) just last year. That number will continue to increase. Add to the FACT that my department is already doing more with less, with no financial relief on the horizon, a significant number of our work group is already looking for greener pastures elsewhere (DB).

Please consider House Bill 79 as a step in the right direction.

I am urging the House Finance Committee to take action on this bill and continue to move it through the legislative process.

Please consider:

- Tier IV has been proven time and time again to be an inadequate retirement system for public safety employees.
- The state is wasting money by training public safety employees and then seeing them leave the state. These are hard working, model citizens, often with families. A gift to the community that values their talents and spirit.
- We are no longer competitive in recruiting. It is proven that an employee hired from out of state is much more likely to leave Alaska within the first 5 years of employment. Taking their training and experience with them.
- We recognize there will be a cost to this bill, but the cost of doing nothing will be much greater.
- Tier IV requires a solution and HB79 is just that. Please let our leadership work with the State to help create a solution that is financially responsible and equitable to all. Please do this for the future of our State and our hard working citizens that live here.

As of this writing, I have no immediate plans to leave the job or community I love. I can tell you however that I have had this discussion with my wife several times already. Without a defined benefit, the retirement carrot dangling out in the distance (in terms of longevity), greener pastures are literally only a plane ride away. Add to the fact that quitting a Tier IV job is the only way to get the use of your financial nest egg for non-traditional investing, it becomes too simple to make the leap of faith.

Please consider the long term health of our city governments, our workers, and our State.
Please help us lead from the front for our future.

Thank you for your concern in this matter.

Landon Forth
Captain, Anchorage Fire Department
[3320 Wells Circle](#)
[Anchorage, AK 99508](#)
[907-242-9957](#) cell
Landonforth@gmail.com

Sent from my iPhone