

Senator Bishop and Representative Wool

As a Californian transplant that has fallen in love with Fairbanks and a member of your district, I want to thank you both for your support of HB55 on firefighter and police officer benefits this legislative session and your support of previous HB79 in the past. I appreciate your efforts to help return benefits for state firefighters and police back to a defined benefit system that will assist in keeping talented personnel in-state.

Our staffing levels at both the Fairbanks Fire Department and the Fairbanks Police Department are consistently suffering from attrition of entry to mid-level workers (many Alaskans among them) who leave the state for communities in the lower 48 for defined benefit retirement programs to help ensure them and their families' futures.

The result is inadequate staffing that damages service delivery, a lack of experience within the agencies that makes it difficult to train or retain excited new recruits, and a negative perception of Public Safety that hurts employee morale. State employees in other lines of work can remain in their careers for longer periods, building on their retirement pools, without suffering the same physical toll taken on by workers in public safety.

HB55 is built upon a realistic 7% rate of return and offers an affordable compromise on benefits that would allow public safety in Alaska to thrive and reduce staffing loss of talented individuals to agencies outside Alaska.

Returning to a defined benefit retirement system will offer tremendous assistance in keeping talented individuals in police, EMS, and fire in Fairbanks and serving our communities.

Thank you both very much for your time,

Fabienne Munoz

Fairbanks Fire Department