
From: Mikey Montgomery [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2021 8:19 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: Support of HB 55

House Finance Committee,

My name is Michael Montgomery. I am a lifelong Alaskan. I was born and raised in Anchorage. I am a graduate of the University of Alaska Anchorage. I have been a Police Officer in Anchorage for almost six years. 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.

Following my initial Academy and Field Training, I received additional training in Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), FBI Crisis Negotiators Course, Advance Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement, Uniformed Investigator Training, Field Training Officer School, Methods Of Instruction, Moving Radar, LIDAR, and Emergency Vehicle Operator Instructor Course (EVOC). I am currently an active Crisis Negotiator, CIT Officer, Field Training Officer, and EVOC Instructor.

I love working in Law Enforcement and I love Alaska. However, with PERS being a defined contribution retirement system it has made me strongly consider leaving Alaska for an agency with a defined benefit retirement or leaving for something in the private sector. There are agencies in other states which have defined benefit in which I could easily get hired, go through an accelerated training program, and get credit for my previous experience both in pay and retirement. With the additional training I have received since starting in Law Enforcement, I have realized I could also leverage those skills into the private sector. This would be into jobs with better pay and a similar defined benefit retirement plan, however are in career fields that do not have a risk to my physical health.

In recent years, amongst my peers in Law Enforcement who are in PERS defined contribution, leaving is a frequent topic of discussion. The reason for this has nothing to do with the work, working conditions, or pay. The vast majority of these officers love where they work and what they do. They love the outpour of support we

get in Alaska compared to many other parts of the nation. The main reason they are actively looking at outside agencies come down to wanting a defined benefit retirement and the long term financial security it provides. In my six years in law enforcement I have seen numerous officers leave law enforcement in Alaska for agencies outside solely for a defined benefit retirement. These are officers who have received large amounts of additional training and that are highly motivated to serve the people of Alaska. I believe with a defined benefit retirement, many of these officers would not consider leaving and spend their entire career serving the people of Alaska. Alaska should not be known for a place to get high quality training, just leave out of state for another agency after a few years. I know I would not consider leaving and working my entire career in Alaska under a defined benefit retirement system.

Thank you for your support of law enforcement and public safety across Alaska. I urge you to support this important piece of legislation.

Respectfully,

Michael Montgomery

Anchorage, AK

From: Chris Thomas <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2021 10:02 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: House Bill 55

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter to you in support of House Bill 55. I have worked at the Anchorage Police Department for almost 18 years. My background includes 5 years of work on patrol and 13 years as a detective in sex crimes units. When I started at the APD in 2003, it was axiomatic that new officers would stay for 20-25 years. This assumption was underpinned by the understanding there would be a pension at the end of our service.

This changed in 2006, when the State of Alaska created a Tier IV system. Since that time, I have known a large number of Tier IV officers who have left for departments in other states (Colorado, Arizona, and Texas being foremost amongst them) that offer pensions. This has caused a slow, steady drain of experience at the APD.

Being a senior police detective in a major crimes unit, I have a unique perspective on the value of the experience our department is losing. It takes time to create a skilled police officer. You have to handle thousands of calls, and investigate thousands of cases, and attend innumerable trials and motion hearings before you really understand this craft. But that takes time. Providing officers with a defined benefit buys us that time and experience. It gives a young officer a reason to stay, and learn, and grow, and to give that back experience back to the community.

As with most professions, an employee with a depth of experience in their career field will typically work smarter, more efficiently, and their work product will reflect their experience. With respect to law enforcement, the outcome of an investigation can turn on a single conversation with a suspect, or with a victim. Or it might hinge on someone's understanding of Miranda, or search and seizure law. I've seen solid police work, built on years of experience, determine the outcomes of homicide, rape, and child abuse cases in our favor. And I've seen where outcomes have not been in the community's favor because an officer made a poor decision, in part because of their inexperience. Quality makes a difference, and time behind the wheel (so to speak) has a direct bearing on quality. Providing a defined benefit buys us that time, and it will influence officers to stay in this field.

I love this profession, and I find value in it beyond its monetary value. But I have held more dead babies than I have live ones, I have spoken with thousands of women and children who have disclosed profound sexual abuse to me, and I have spoken with suspects who have confessed to doing unspeakably heinous things to other people. I have endured this trauma in large part because I know I have a pension waiting for me.

I will stay at APD for 7 more years. At that point I will have 25 years on. I am concerned that if the State does not remedy the Tier IV system, law enforcement in Alaska will not be able to deliver the quality outcomes we depend on. And this will be in part because our departments will have become training departments for organizations who offer pensions.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this letter. If you have any questions, or if there is anything I can do to be helpful in this matter, please feel free to reach me at this email address, or by phone at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Chris Thomas
[REDACTED]

From: Shawn Davies [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2021 10:47 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 55 Peace Officer and Firefighter Retirement Bill

May 6, 2021

To: House Finance Committee Members

Subject: HB 55 Peace Officer and Firefighter Retirement Bill

Dear House Finance Committee Members,

My name is Shawn Davies and I am a detective with the Anchorage Police Department, Crimes Against Children Unit. My current assignment has me working to protect children from sexual abuse and serious physical injury. I have worked in law enforcement in Alaska for almost twenty-two (22) years. I am writing to express my concerns for recruitment and retention for the future of law enforcement and first responders.

As a member of a large law enforcement agency in Alaska, I have witnessed firsthand the departure of trained and qualified police officers and detectives for other police departments with a defined benefit retirement system or for other professions entirely because of the problems with the Tier IV retirement system in the State of Alaska. These officers have told me about their reason to leave and their concerns that focus around the financial future for themselves and their families related to their retirement uncertainty in the Tier IV system. Every time our police department loses staff, that employee takes with them their training and experience. It is that training and experience that takes time and resources to replace with the concern that it will inevitably be a repeating cycle. This is a something that I have watched occur since my hiring at the Anchorage Police Department in 2007 to include seeing members of my own academy leave to protect their financial future.

This truly creates public safety concerns with this loss of law enforcement due to the current retirement system, compounded with the retirement of our most experienced officers and detectives at the end of their long careers from a defined benefit system. The creation of a new defined benefit retirement system will allow Alaska law enforcement to grow to become a strong, experienced work force that will protect Alaska and all communities now and into the future.

With the inability to recruit and retain long term first responder employees with a defined benefit retirement system the burden falls on our communities. The constant costs to public safety that cannot maintain a consistently growing department with a mix of long term and incoming employees is unacceptable. First responders have shown a willingness protect their communities through sacrifice when the call arises. However, first responders have also shown the ability to work with elected officials to address the problems with the Tier IV retirement system. House Bill 55 is the solution that will address concerns for recruitment, retention, and overall public safety for the future of Alaskans.

As I near the time where I will be considering retirement, I want to leave this profession knowing that the members of public safety in the future will not only be financially protected but that citizens will have the most qualified and trained professionals to serve them. And in my current job as a detective who protects children from some of the worst crimes imaginable, I want to know that there will be qualified detectives to protect the true future of Alaska, our youth.

I want to thank all of you for taking the time to read this letter and I encourage you all to move forward with House Bill 55 as the solution to address the concerns with the Tier IV retirement in public safety. I approve this letter to be added to any public record on this matter.

Shawn Davies

Detective



[Eagle River, Alaska](#)

From: Rosendo Perez [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2021 11:05 AM
To: House Finance; chendoprz
Subject: Support for HB 55
Attachments: Det_R_PEREZ_HB55_support.pdf

AK HOUSE FINANCE COMETTEE,

Please see my attached letter in support of HB55. I am a PERSIV employee and I strongly support a pension for police/fire

Rosendo Perez

~~~~~  
~~~~~  
"...while the horizon of strategy is bounded by the war, grand strategy looks beyond the war to the subsequent peace. It should not only combine the various instruments [financial, diplomat, and ethical], but so regulate their use as to avoid damage to the future state of peace-- for its security and prosperity. The sorry state of peace... that has followed most wars can be traced to the fact that, unlike strategy, the realm of grand strategy is for the most part terra incognita-- still awaiting exploration, and understanding."

--B.H. Lidell Hart, Strategy

From: Jason McGinnis [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2021 12:17 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB55 Support

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jason McGinnis and I am currently employed by the Municipality of Anchorage as a Police Officer with the Swing Shift Patrol Division. I am 38 years of age and my hire date was December of 2018. My prior job had no retirement and no benefits and having that said, I decided to take the plunge to Public Service for my family, my community and myself. My family, both Maternal and Paternal sides, have been dedicated to Public Service either through Military or Law Enforcement in the past and present. My mindset was any retirement is better than no retirement. I have heard stories of the pension and how other departments in the lower 48 that still have active pensions available to new Officers. Myself, being a fairly new Officer, was not concerned about that at the time of hire. After doing more and more research, the Pension became much more desirable as time has passed. I am also aware that an HRA (Health Retirement Account) is part of the House Bill 55, which is an absolutely impressive attribute to the Bill. If this passes through the legislature, this will be a huge victory on many levels. The current Officers will be more inclined to stay in Anchorage and serve the community, rather than look at other departments in the lower 48. The recruitment aspect will create a huge pool of potential new Officers coming from all over the United States, increasing our chances of finding top quality applicants. I am all in favor for this Bill and for all Police Officers and Firefighters to have access to the possibility of this quality retirement plan.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Officer Jason McGinnis

From: Sam Sullivan [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2021 7:55 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 55

Good Evening,

My name is Samuel Sullivan and I am a life long Alaskan. I have be a police officer with Anchorage Police Department for 4.5 years. I love what I do. My coworkers love what they do. Listen, I'm an Alaskan lifer I'm not going anywhere. However, some of my coworkers are not. I don't blame them. There are outside states that offer much more stable benefits packages and at the end of the day they have to do what is right by them and their families. Alaska is a stepping stone until they get vested after five years. That is not a good way to retain the best. Because regardless of what the Troopers say; APD has the best training in the state and it is top tier for the whole country. Why do we want to train the best people just to give them to Washington? Anyways, my two cents is pass HB55 and we have a better chance of retaining the best.

Thanks,
Sam

From: Renee Oistad <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, May 07, 2021 10:40 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: Please support HB 55

Good morning,

Please support HB 55, the Peace Officer and Firefighter Retirement Bill that would return PERS Tier IV to a Defined Benefit retirement plan.

I am one of those life-long Alaskans who didn't know who I wanted to be when I grew up. After graduating from the University of Alaska Anchorage with a bachelor's degree in business, I applied to work in the Records Division of the Anchorage Police Department. I still didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, but I knew working at APD could be my career. The benefits and pay were competitive and I would have a retirement after 30 years of service which is what a non-sworn employee must work (as opposed to 20 or 25 years of service for a sworn employee) in order to retire. While I unfortunately missed being hired under PERS Tier II by six weeks, I was fortunate enough to be hired under PERS Tier III in September 1996. I will celebrate my 25-year work anniversary later this year, and I am already planning for my hard-earned retirement in the fall of 2026.

When the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan went away, there was a marked difference in the employees who were hired under PERS Tier IV. I was used to working with people who hired on to APD with the goal of spending an entire career there. There was a real family feel within the department and there was a vast amount of knowledge amongst those who had been with APD for several years. The younger employees, to include myself, learned so much from those who had been around the block a few times. It's the kind of information you can't get from anywhere other than those who have lived it. Policing, regardless of what department you're referring to and what type of position you're speaking of, is absolutely the type of job people become most effective in when knowledge obtained over years of trial and error has been shared with those who are new to that type of work. All of us, both sworn and non-sworn, were better at our jobs at the start of our careers because those with experience cared what the department would look like when they retired and moved on. Everyone employed at APD were invested in the department's mission because we were all in it for the long haul. Work was our second home.

That's gone. Most of the non-sworn employees I've worked with for most of my career with have left. The last of the sworn employees, who were hired under a Defined Benefit retirement plan, are hitting their 25 years in 2021. The vast majority of the employees who remain, both sworn and non-sworn, are what I refer to as the "five-year people." Because that is how long they are staying. After five years of service, they can leave for another department and take their 401K saving plan with them. That's exactly what they are doing. It would not be fair nor accurate to say that the Five-Year People do not care about APD. But it would be fair for me to say they don't have the same personal investment in it that those of us did who hired on with the intention of staying long enough to retire. And that matters. I do believe the service APD offers to the community is of high quality, but it was higher when our employees had long-term career goals within the department.

There's also a money side to all of this. It's very expensive to hire and train new officers. The training APD offers is high-quality. Due to not having a Defined Benefit retirement plan, we are turning out well-trained employees who other departments seek to hire. Other departments who do have Defined Benefit plans. APD is very much on the losing end of that stick along with all of the tax payers who are essentially footing the bill for us to train officers for other departments in other states.

Please support and pass HB 55. Make the Anchorage Police Department what it used to be – a place where employees want to spend many years serving the residents within the Municipality of Anchorage.

Thank you for your time.

Most Respectfully,

Renee D. Oistad

From: Nicholas Bowe <n[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, May 07, 2021 11:47 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB55

Hi, I work in law enforcement and have done so for the last 9 years. Over the years, I have seen fellow employees and even academy mates leave a high quality department like APD and go to the lower 48 in search of one thing- a pension. I have heard the arguments both in support of and against a defined benefit retirement system here in Alaska, and I personally think that it would help to retain quality employees in state. I support resurrecting the DB retirement plan for those that would like to participate in such a program. I believe that people like options and that is the ONLY area that departments in the lower 48 have us beat.

Thank you for the time, effort, and consideration in this matter. - Ofc. Bowe.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: phillip mckee [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, May 09, 2021 11:41 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: House bill 55

Hello,

My name is Phil McKee. I have been in law enforcement in Alaska since 2009. I started my career as a Court Services Officer for AST and switched to APD in 2019. In my 12 years in law enforcement in Alaska one is very clear...tier 3 and below stay until 20-25 years on. Tier 4 officers are hard to retain because there isn't enough incentive to stay like there is for the others.

Please pass this bill and help keep public safety on track. Thank you for your time. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at 1 [REDACTED]

Thank you,
Phil McKee

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

21 January 2022

Senator Costello
State Capital
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Letter in support of House Bill 55

Senator Costello,

I am writing to request your support of House Bill 55, "An Act relating to participation of certain peace officers and firefighters in the defined benefit and defined contribution plans of the Public Employees' Retirement System of Alaska; relating to eligibility of peace officers and firefighters for medical, disability, and death benefits; relating to liability of the Public Employees' Retirement System of Alaska; and providing for an effective date".

The importance of this bill passing the Senate this year is significant, and an opportunity for our legislature to solve the problem of our firefighters and police officers leaving the great state of Alaska for other states with a defined benefit retirement system. I am writing in support of this bill, and urging the legislature pass this bill.

I have worked in Alaska emergency services for the last 24 years and have seen a significant shift in attitude for our firefighters and police officers about staying in Alaska, primarily based on the retirement system here. Currently, I serve as the fire chief of an organization that trains and educates the future of Alaska fire service. I frequently watch our young folks attain jobs in the lower 48, at a highly successful rate. They are leaving our state with the education and experience we desperately need to keep.

For example, this month alone we had four graduates get hired laterally for the Memphis Fire Department. A lateral hire means they are taking their experience received in Alaska and forgoing a full academy, and are essentially operational in a very quick manner. This often results in the firefighter being hired at a higher rate of pay. Tennessee recently (2020) passed legislation providing for a hybrid retirement plan that accommodate firefighters and police officers, and makes them eligible to retire after 25 years.

When I look at the future of the fire service in Alaska, I am concerned about the retention and longevity of the firefighters and police officers. This will result in more inexperienced individuals doing a highly dangerous and important mission. I couldn't emphasize the importance of passing this legislation and taking a step in the right direction for the future of public safety.

Forrest Kulper

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Forrest Kulper', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Fire Chief
University Fire Department

Nick Clark

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Alaska State Legislature
State Capital Building
Juneau, AK 99801

Senate Labor and Commerce Committee,

I am a 9-year Firefighter/Paramedic with the City of Fairbanks Fire Department. I have now wrote a letter(s) for each year of my service in Alaska requesting we move forward with a new system. I have seen first hand the struggles that tier 4 has caused to public servants. FFD has turned into a short-term training department for good people to work their resumes and move on. We hire some amazing people that would spend their career at FFD if we had a retirement system that provided some dignity when it came time to retire. The DC Tier 4 system is not going to meet the satisfactory mark for our members.

Last I checked, on average, our members have a 27% chance of meeting the bar for income in retirement with DC system. I am afraid the FFD members are going to be well below this mark. There is not a better time to act than now as we come out of some of the hardest times our members have seen.

HB 55 is a proven plan that will get us closer to the dignity deserved in retirement. Though I am not pleased it leaves out important aspects such as healthcare, I understand this is the sacrifice we must make so this plan will survive generations to come. I support HB 55 and I ask you to move this out of committee. Thank you for your time, consideration and support.

With respect,

Nick Clark
Fairbanks Firefighter

Melodie Wilterdink

From: Zach Rittel [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, January 27, 2022 11:47 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson
Subject: HB55 support

To the Alaska Senate Labor and Commerce committee,

I am writing in hopes that you will support HB 55, Peace Officer and Firefighter Retirement benefits.

I am currently employed at the City of Fairbanks as a Captain with the Fire Department. A job that I greatly enjoy and strive to provide an extraordinary service to the community. Unfortunately the current retirement system, that was put in place in 2006, has changed the nature of the Fire Department and the service we are able to provide. Since the implementation of Tier IV our employee retention has plummeted and we are constantly losing dedicated and skilled firefighters to out of state jobs. Half of the department is under 3 years on the job, this has significant effects in familiarity, area knowledge, operations experience and makes everything we do more hazardous and less effective. We are continually having to perform recruit training and orientation, an intensive and expensive process that takes people away from responding to emergencies and takes the place of mastery-level training.

A 7 year employee on my shift recently left for Bellingham, Washington and a 5 year employee is currently testing with Tacoma, Washington. They were both climbing the promotion ladder and cite lack of a defined benefit retirement as their primary reason for leaving. There are numerous other examples of employees leaving early, including five of our six female firefighters last year.

Implementing the HB 55 plan would change my retirement from a savings account to a pension. It has several safeguards to avoid the costs that were included in the previous defined benefit plans. This would dramatically affect employee retention and the pool for initial hiring. Currently many of the departments in the interior of Alaska have an experience gap and are having difficulty hiring qualified and seasoned officers, the people making life and death decisions. I believe that this bill would help change that trend and contribute to stopping the population loss that the state is seeing.

This change in retirement system would likely affect my career path and service to the community. I currently am looking at leaving the fire service at less than 25 years and not becoming a chief officer, even though we will have many vacancies at that level. If HB 55 passes I would most likely change that to finishing out a career with Fairbanks Fire and spending several years as a chief officer.

Thank you for your support

Zachary Rittel,
Captain, Fairbanks Fire Department

Melodie Wilterdink

From: Kneaper, Brian D. [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, January 27, 2022 12:55 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce; Rep. Andy Josephson
Subject: Support of House Bill 55

I am writing in regards to House Bill 55 for the Tier IV public safety retirement employees are currently receiving. My dad worked for 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 is 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 outside the State of Alaska with another fire department, 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 must 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, most of our public safety employees will be Tier IV members. I know several AFD and APD employees who are actively seeking employment outside of the state to get a better retirement. Who can blame them? Three different independent projections have said that it is VERY likely that our public safety Tier IV members will run out of money in retirement. We also will not receive social security in our retirement and the 5% match we get in our 401A doesn't even match what we would get in social security when we reach the appropriate age.

We are one of the only if not the only state with a retirement plan like Tier IV for our public safety employees. We have already seen retention problems in the public safety section of our state, and it is only going to continue to get worse as more and more members become Tier IV employees. We as a state can no longer compete with the lower 48 and the retirements they have to offer. I can apply and do a lateral transfer, make almost the same amount of money, and get a pension in retirement, to almost any department in the Pacific Northwest. I have watched and listened to multiple meetings with the legislature where we have had numerous chiefs from all departments of public safety, fire, police, department of corrections, and they have all said time and time again that we can't keep employees in state.

Retention is more than keeping our first responders in state but its also keeping knowledge and experience. The more people we lose the more knowledge and experience we let leave the state. This is a huge risk not only to the public but to our fellow crew members as well. You can't learn what we do each day in a year. It takes years, and every time you lose even just a 5-year guy to another department you are losing experience that will eventually hurt someone or worse. This is the value our state puts on our first responders.

I ask and strongly encourage that you support and pass HB55, to give our first responders a retirement.

Thank you for your time,
Brian Kneaper
Firefighter
Anchorage Fire Department

Senate Labor and Commerce Committee,

My name is Tyler Greensfelder, and I am a lifelong resident of Alaska, a Tier 4 member, and a Captain with the Anchorage Fire Department. I am writing you today to ask for your support of House Bill 55. I was hired in 2013 with the Anchorage Fire Department and have seen firsthand the effect this lack of defined benefit retirement system is having on retention. We are losing exemplary firefighters, primarily to Washington, every year due to their defined benefit package and in fact just lost an academy-mate just last month to Bellingham Fire Department. These are firefighters that our department and state has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars training just to see them leave due to the uncertainty of Alaska's retirement. Three independent projections have shown that public safety employees are highly likely to run out of money during retirement. We literally can't afford to not act; we are bleeding out money to other states who are offering accelerated academies and pay grades for already trained firefighters.

This bill just makes sense. It is modeled off Washington State's system, (which is overfunded), and one of the best in the country. There are multiple safeguard mechanisms in place to prevent unfunded liability by sharing the risk with the employees and the state so that no one group is left holding the liability, and the benefits have been drastically reduced from previous defined benefit tiers.

Time is of the essence. Many workers who have a 401k have the physical ability to keep working if the market crashes unexpectedly as they approach retirement. After 25 long years of lifting people off the ground, fighting fires, and getting in and out of the trucks most bodies are physically unable to continue. Tier 4 is creating an environment for substantial workers compensation claims to grow as the average firefighter is forced to work longer and longer due to the lack of financial stability. If your house is on fire, do you want a 65 year old firefighter to be coming?

During the last session I testified in the House that I myself, a lifelong Alaskan, and product of the Alaska university system was looking to uproot my family from here to go work for the Everett Fire Department in Washington. I had one lawmaker ask me to just "hold on" and told me he believed in this bill and our sponsor, which was Rep. Kopp at the time. While ultimately, I did receive an offer of employment, I did turn down the job. I am still here holding on, waiting for the state to do the right thing and support public safety. Public safety members face risk in their jobs every day, we measure it and deal with it appropriately, and we are asking the legislator to do the same.

Thank you for your time and please pass HB55 out of the committee today.

Sincerely,

Tyler Greensfelder

Melodie Wilterdink

From: Mark Fvette [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, January 27, 2022 1:31 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce; Rep. Andy Josephson
Subject: House Bill 55

Good afternoon to the office of Representative Andy Josephson and Senate Labor & Commerce;

This email / letter is in support of HB55.

I am a 20+ year firefighter with Capital City Fire/Rescue, when I started my job I was able to have a defined benefit program for me to retire with. In 2006 our retirement went from a defined benefit to a defined contribution. The tier 4 as we call it has not helped with retaining and Recruiting firefighter's here in the Capital City, we are scraping the bottom of the barrel to just fill our front line captains and Paramedics. We are getting 5 year firefighters that are testing for Captains and brand new Paramedics that need to take charge do a scene with less than a year on with out the skills and training from 10 year paramedics as they are taking lateral positions in the lower 48 with defined benefit retirement I ask that you take a good look at HB 55 and see all that it has to offer with Retention and recruitment for the state of Alaska.

I want to thank the committee for looking at this HB55 and please give it a do pass to senate finance.

Thank you
Mark Fvette
Local 4303
AKPFFA SEVP.

Sent from my iPhone

Melodie Wilterdink

From: kyle fox [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, January 27, 2022 1:43 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce; Rep. Andy Josephson
Subject: HB55 Support

To whom this may concern,

My name is Kyle Fox and I am a Firefighter with The Anchorage Fire Department. I am providing this written testimony in support of HB 55. This is a very important bill for my future and the future of many first responders around the state. It is important to me because Tier IV has been proven time and time again to be an inadequate retirement system for public safety. We lose good people to out of state departments and it makes it a challenge to recruit quality candidates because they seek employment elsewhere with better retirement plans.

The state and municipalities are losing money by training public safety employees and then seeing them leave the state. We again are no longer competitive in recruiting.

I recognize that there will be a cost to this bill, but the cost of doing nothing will be much greater in the long run. Tier IV requires a solution for public safety employees and HB 55 is just that. HB55 is a plan built with reasonable costs and reasonable risks, that incorporates the best practices of the most successful pension plans in the country. HB 55 will make my retirement future more secure and I would be optimistic in retirement. After all the efforts first responders go to, to provide excellent and top-quality public service, please show us thanks in return by making this HB 55 a reality.

Sincerely,
Kyle Fox

Melodie Wilterdink

From: jeremiah gilliland [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, January 27, 2022 1:55 PM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce; Rep. Andy Josephson
Subject: HB55

To the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee,

I am writing you to provide testimony to, and support of HB-55. I am an Anchorage firefighter and have been one for over 14 years now. I have helped and watched over the years as we have tried multiple times to find an agreeable workaround for the flawed system that is our tier 4 retirement. I have also helplessly watched every attempt other than HB-55 fail for that entire time. We are currently closer to an acceptable form of retirement than we have ever been in my time as a firefighter.

Being a member of the first group of firefighters hired under tier 4 I have a firm grasp on what is at stake here. I have been trying to educate the newer tier 4 members of our department for my entire career. I have also watched as numerous individuals from within our department have opted to leave our great city and state and work for other departments that offer fully funded defined benefit retirements. It is a trend that will no doubt continue if we do nothing about tier 4.

We have a chance looking forward to HB-55 to provide a retirement package that ensures the success of our members in retirement at no extra risk to any one group, the risk is equally shared. A retirement at no more of a cost than what tier 4 currently costs. A reasonable solution to the woes of tier 4 that would offset our personnel losses within all of the professions that the tier 4 retirement encompasses. We could retain the valuable experience of all of our public safety employees and keep them here in state instead of being a "training ground" for other departments to reap the rewards of the collective efforts put into these fine employees locally.

Now is our time and chance, now is your time and chance. Please support HB-55 and pass it out of your committee. We have an opportunity to ensure the future of public safety in our great state that is Alaska. I firmly believe that is something that is very worth supporting, I'm sure you do as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jeremiah Gilliland
Anchorage Fire Department
Fire Apparatus Engineer