
From:

Sent:

Tuesday, April 12, 2022 9:21 AM

To:

Rep. Kelly Merrick

Subject:

Let's pass HB 220

Dear Representative Kelly Merrick,

As an Alaska educator, I wanted to thank you for your work on the operating budget that passed the House of Representatives this past weekend.

Thank you for prioritizing Alaska students and public education in the budget.

As you now know, Alaska educators have the worst retirement system in the country, and the turnover it's causing is correlated with poor student achievement.

According to Dianne Hirshberg of the UAA Center for Education Policy Research at ISER:

The 5 school districts with the LOWEST turnover had 85.8% of students scoring proficient in reading.

The 5 school districts with the HIGHEST turnover had only 46.9% of students scoring proficient in reading.

Teacher turnover is hurting our students.

HB 220 represents the possibility of a return to a real retirement system for educators and other public employees in Alaska. This change would have a positive impact on our students, our communities, and our state and local economies.

Currently, educators hired after 2006 have no access to Social Security and only a defined contribution retirement option. This system means those educators will likely outlive their retirement savings.

I love my job, I love working with students, and I love Alaska. However, without any access to a secure income in retirement for myself, or any educator entering our system, I'm losing hope.

HB 220 represents a chance to reverse this devastating trend and provide a real retirement option to thousands of dedicated public employees. I implore you to continue to review this issue, work on HB 220, and pass this bill before the end of the session.

Sincerely,

Barbara Schneider

From:

Sent:

Tuesday, April 12, 2022 9:20 AM

To:

Rep. Kelly Merrick

Subject:

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Sincerely,

Lara Applebaum

[Redacted Signature]

From: [REDACTED]
<tobiasfrieb@everyactioncustom.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 9:55 AM
To: Rep. Kelly Merrick
Subject: Let's pass HB 220

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Sincerely,
Tobias Frieb

From:

To:

Subject:

Tuesday, April 12, 2022 10:09 AM

Rep. Kelly Merrick

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Sincerely,

Amanda Trower

[Redacted Signature]

From: [REDACTED]
@everyactioncustom.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 1:15 PM
To: Rep. Kelly Merrick
Subject: Let's pass HB 220

Dear Representative Kelly Merrick,

As an Alaska educator, I wanted to thank you for your work on the operating budget that passed the House of Representatives this past weekend.

Thank you for prioritizing Alaska students and public education in the budget.

As you now know, Alaska educators have the worst retirement system in the country, and the turnover it's causing is correlated with poor student achievement.

According to Dianne Hirshberg of the UAA Center for Education Policy Research at ISER:

The 5 school districts with the LOWEST turnover had 85.8% of students scoring proficient in reading.
The 5 school districts with the HIGHEST turnover had only 46.9% of students scoring proficient in reading.

Teacher turnover is hurting our students.

HB 220 represents the possibility of a return to a real retirement system for educators and other public employees in Alaska. By supporting this bill, you would enable educators like me to stay in Alaska for the length of our professional careers.

I was hired by the Anchorage School District in 2019. I did not know the poor retirement plan when I relocated to this state. I have no access to Social Security and only a defined contribution retirement option. This system means that I and so many of my coworkers will likely outlive their retirement savings.

I love my job, I love working with students and their families, and I love exploring Alaska. However, without any access to a secure income in retirement for myself, or any educator entering our system, I'm losing hope and am experiencing stress for my financial future. I look to relocate out of Alaska every spring. How many other speech language pathologists feel the same? Many!

HB 220 represents a chance to reverse this devastating trend and provide a real retirement option to thousands of dedicated public employees. I implore you to continue to review this issue, work on HB 220, and pass this bill before the end of the session. Please support this bill and do your part to pass this.

Sincerely,
Laura Nitsche
[REDACTED]

From: Billy Cardentey [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2022 9:35 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 220 Hearing

Dear members of the committee,

I am a public employee working in The Fairbanks North Star Borough, I ask that HB 2020 be amended to allow public employees and first responders to enjoy the same benefits, fully vest at 5 years, and would still be able to retire after 20 years or 55 years old.

We deserve a dignified retirement and the current system is not working.

Thank you.

Billy K. Cardentey

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 9:51 AM
To: Rep. Kelly Merrick
Subject: Please Consider HB 220 for Fair Retirement

Dear Representative Kelly Merrick,

As an Alaska educator, I wanted to thank you for your work on the operating budget that passed the House of Representatives this past weekend.

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Sincerely,
Nick Steele

[REDACTED]

From:

To:

Subject:

Rep. Kelly Merrick

Let's pass HB 220! I want to teach (versus quitting so I can have a real retirement)!

AM

Dear Representative Kelly Merrick,

As an Alaska educator, I wanted to thank you for your work on the operating budget that passed the House of Representatives this past weekend.

Honestly, as a teacher in Fairbanks, the idea of a good pension has changed my thinking from "when do I need to quit teaching and get a job with a real retirement- very soon!" to "with a pension plan, I wonder how long I can teach- 25 years? 30 years?"

Thank you for prioritizing Alaska students and public education in the budget. As a mother of two, and an aunt of many, I want great schools for kids in Alaska and I know that means retaining great teachers.

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Sincerely,

Dawn Fitzpatrick

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 10:47 AM
To: Rep. Kelly Merrick
Subject: HB 220: Please Consider Tier III Staff, too!

Dear Representative Kelly Merrick,

I am favor of a return to a Defined Benefit Retirement system, but I wanted to also advocate for those of us who have been in Defined Contribution for a long time. I started teaching in Alaska in 2006, right after Tier III went into effect, so I am one of the educators still working in Alaska who has a Defined Contribution plan for the longest amount of time: 15 years.

The last time this type of legislation was proposed, it included a buy-in option for Defined Contribution members to return to Defined Benefit. However, the rate was completely insulting. It was less than 2 to 1. So if you had worked for 10 years in Defined Contribution, you would be able to buy-in to Defined Benefit and get credit for less than 5 years.

Now that HB 220 is coming up, I have reached out to NEA Alaska, to bill sponsors, and to my own representatives and I have not gotten a clear answer, which is dark foreshadowing of the rate we might be able to anticipate. I strongly advocate for a 1:1 buy-in option for Tier III members wanting to convert their Defined Contribution plan to a Defined Benefit plan. Anything less devalues the years that have been spent serving Alaska's children and communities.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Taryn Stein

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 10:26 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: House Bill 220

Good morning,

I am an Operator for the State of Alaska DOT and Pf. I am writing to please ask to go ahead with the house Bill 220. This Bill will make retiring not a scary experience and provides the hard workers that kept the state moving through schools and infrastructure a peace of mind.

Sincerely, Sarah Mallette

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 7:11 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: Pass HB 220

Sent from my iPhone Good morning, pls pass the HB 220 so that we can get a better retirement Thank you,
Benigno Rivamonte

From:

dae sung <[REDACTED]>
Tuesday, April 12, 2022 6:58 AM
House Finance

To:

Please pass the HB .we need better retirement.. thank you.Dae sung

From: Paul Jenkins [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2022 8:16 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: Retirement

Hi,

I hate to be a whiner, but you really need to pass HB 220. I am almost 67 years old, and I cannot afford to retire until I am 70. I have worked for the State of Alaska for ten years, and will be leaving with a 401K that amounts to 1/4th of what I make. I am taking care of my 92 year old mother, which adds to my monthly expenses.

Please do the right thing, and help us peons have some kind of life after 70.

Thank you!

Paul L. Jenkins
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPad

From: John Bannatyne <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2022 8:12 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: If you don't do something soon you are going to drown

A lot of us are ready to walk and we have already started looking at other jobs because state jobs have gone to the way side so bad the private sector have so far passed the state mechanics and with no mechanics you don't have shit Sent from my iPhone

From: Calin Buerge [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2022 8:10 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: Retirement

You know I'm very puzzled as to how this hasn't been figured out yet. Our dot state wide is struggling to find employees. You've taken away the pension and lowered pay. You wonder why we can't keep anyone for more than a couple years. Dot has become a stepping stone and it won't change until you guys actually try to make changes. We need the pension back and better pay especially with the inflation we are seeing.

From: Cheryl & Mark Lovegreen [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2022 3:43 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 220

Dear House Finance Committee,

Thank you for your service to Alaskans. I know you have a lot on your plate right now, but I hope you can pass HB 220 out of committee soon. This bill will help school districts all over the state so they can recruit and retain quality teachers. Please support HB 220.

Cheryl Lovegreen
Anchorage

From: Pete Praetorius [REDACTED] >
Sent: Wednesday, March 16, 2022 5:14 PM
To: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Kelly Merrick
Cc: Representative.Jennifer.Johnston@akleg.gov; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Bart LeBon; Rep. Adam Wool; Rep. Cathy Tilton; Representative.Colleen.Sullivan.Reynolds@akleg.gov; Rep. Ben Carpenter; Melanie Arthur; Abel Bult-Ito
Subject: HB 220: Retirement Systems-Defined Benefit Option
Attachments: HB-220-resolution-on-letterhead -3-16-22.pdf

Hello Representatives Foster and Merrick:

As the Chair of the Legislative Relations committee for United Academics, the collective bargaining unit for University of Alaska full-time faculty members, I am writing to present to you a resolution regarding HB 220: Retirement Systems-Defined Benefit Option, which was passed on March 10th by our union's Representative Assembly.

In addition to the attached resolution, I would like to share with you my own experience. Before coming to UAA Mat-Su in 2003, I taught for three years for the University of Montana, at Montana Tech, in Butte Montana. Although this was professionally a good job, I was convinced to leave Montana and come teach for the University of Alaska for the following reasons:


- **The pay was better:** I had a jump in salary of 17.5% when I left Montana for the University of Alaska.
- **The health insurance was better:** both the deductibles and premiums were lower for health insurance when I came to the University of Alaska.
- **Much better retirement program:** the University of Montana had a defined contribution retirement program; when I came to the University of Alaska, I was able to participate in the PERS/TERS defined benefits program.

Unfortunately, the three reasons I left Montana to come and teach for the University of Alaska are reversed: the University of Alaska now offers lower pay, abysmal health insurance, and a terrible retirement program. And although I was able to leave one tenure-track teaching job for another, most faculty jobs with the University of Alaska now are term positions. For these reasons, we are having a hard time recruiting and retaining faculty members: we don't have nearly as many applicants for jobs as we have in the past, and UA is currently experiencing an annual turnover rate 10.4%.

I believe that unless the university can turn around the compensation and benefits packages for current and recruited faculty, the university will suffer the continued downward spiral of low enrollments and credibility among our potential students and our peer institutions. Thus, I urge you to pass HB 220: Retirement Systems-Defined Benefit Option.

Thank you,

Pete Praetorius

Pete Praetorius, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Communication
University of Alaska Anchorage | Matanuska-Susitna College
8295 E. College Drive
Palmer Alaska, 99645
pwpraetorius@alaska.edu
907-745-9728 office


From: Justin Priest [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 10:36 PM
To: House Finance
Cc: Sen. Bert Stedman; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Subject: In Support of HB 220

Honorable members of the Finance Committee,

I am submitting comment in support of HB 220. I am a public employee proud to work for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Sitka and a PERS Tier III employee; I have nothing to gain financially from this bill. As you've likely heard perspectives from employees in many other departments, I'd like to offer a slightly different perspective on the passage of this bill.

As a research supervisor overseeing projects around Southeast Alaska, I know firsthand the value of the data we collect and its importance to fisheries. Unfortunately, I've also seen how dependent we are on valuable employees, employees who we are losing faster than can be replaced. The addition of a pension option would greatly improve employee retention for salaried staff and offer seasonal staff a reason to try to make a career in our department.

Over my career, I've watched many peers that started after 2006 leave state employment simply because they were not incentivized to remain. This leaves the workload higher on the remaining staff, causing burnout and less time for research.

Consider the potential ramifications of continued employee attrition: fewer staff means less research with less active management. Active management principles are directly responsible for dozens of fishery openers each season. By improving employee retention in ADF&G, we ensure that our fishing economy stays resilient. It's a win all around: the ecosystem is well monitored to prevent overharvest, research has better data for decisions, management has more information to make judgement openings, and employees have more incentive to stay working for ADF&G.

Please pass HB 220 to stem the tide of employee loss. This will pay dividends in our future fisheries.
Thank you for your consideration,

Justin Priest
Fisheries Biologist 3
Sitka

From: Cheryl & Mark Lovegreen [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 24, 2022 9:14 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: In support of HB 220

I appreciate your service to Alaska. While you have many important issues before you, the consideration of HB 220 will have a huge impact on our future. Passing HB 220 will create a cost-neutral system and better return on investment for state money, and will help recruit and retain public servants like state troopers and educators. It will also allow local communities to provide a better education for our students.

Please pass this bill and encourage your colleagues to support it on the floor.

Thanks for your time,

Cheryl Lovegreen
Anchorage