
From: Mo Eppers [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 20, 2022 5:21 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 220 Support

Dear members of the House Finance Committee,

I'm writing today in ardent support of HB 220 that would bring back a coveted pension option for devoted public employees. I am a public employee who has worked nearly ten years for the Juneau School District. In my time with the district I have been a member of the Juneau Education Support Staff first having worked in an integrated preschool setting with special needs children and now over six years supporting our homeless and foster students through the Office of Student Services.

The Office of Student Services is one that sees a large degree of traffic pertaining to all things related to Special Education, Nurses and Health Team, School Counselors, Integrated Preschool, Sports Activities and McKinney Vento/homeless supports. I have a unique vantage point that has seen far to many people resign from the district and the constant need to fill what seems like increasingly unfillable positions. These positions are taxed with immense responsibilities to care for and educate Juneau's 4,300 children/youth and we serve the entire community at large. Think back to the beginning of the pandemic and how the community responded to school closures and ultimately our communities need for affordable/free childcare. Think about the custodians, maintenance crews working feverishly and lunch staff assembling food bags for every student in the school district. Our nurses, health aids and many office staff manned the Covid 19 hotline and filled in at community vaccination points to keep our community as healthy and safe as possible. Now, imagine the pandemic without these same individuals that stepped up during a time of need and great uncertainty.

I work with many other public servants who serve in impactful positions across Juneau, Southeast and the entire State of Alaska. Policemen, State Troopers, Firefighters, hospital staff, OCS, State employees, plow truck drivers, teachers and support staff, to name a few, are ALL facing unprecedented retention and recruitment problems. All of these public agencies have incredibly high numbers of attrition and we've seen the burden first hand during the pandemic. We cannot attract the same caliber of educators, first responders, hospital workers, city and state employees with the current rate of pay, cost of living and inequitable retirement solutions that can be found down South.

The tradeoff for working government jobs used to be that oftentimes even though we were paid less than most private sector jobs we were at least guaranteed our hard earned and dignified retirement. Inflation continues to soar higher, affordable housing shortages and jobs that don't pay as much as our neighbors in the lower 48 cause many of us to look elsewhere for employment opportunities that will afford us a more conducive quality of life and a decent retirement. At the rate we're going we won't be able to retire in our seventies and it's likely that many of us will have to continue working in order to support ourselves and make ends meet.

For a moment, please try to imagine the State of Alaska without law enforcement and fire protection, severely understaffed hospitals, sparse city offices and children without the education and care they deserve. We cannot compete with the lower 48 when it comes to jobs and retirement benefits. There is a serious high cost association with living and working in the State of Alaska. Please support HB 220 and give SOA public employees a defined benefit option and reason to stay in Alaska.

Thank you.

Mollie Eppers
Administrative Assistant for Students and Families in Transition

JSD, Office of Student Services

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

From: [REDACTED]
@everyactioncustom.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 20, 2022 11:47 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,
Carrie Jones

[REDACTED]



**TEAMSTERS
LOCAL 959
STATE OF ALASKA**

Affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Gary Dixon, Secretary-Treasurer

520 E. 34th Ave., Suite 102, Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Phone (907) 751-8500 • Fax (907) 751-8599

April 20, 2022

Via Email Rep.Kelly.Merrick@akleg.gov & Rep.Neal.Foster@akleg.gov

The Honorable Kelly Merrick & Neal Foster

Co-Chairs

House Finance Committee

120 4th St.

Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Letter of Support for HB 220: Defined Benefits

Committee Co-Chairs:

Teamsters Local 959 fully endorses House Bill 220 – An Act Relating to Public Employees Retirement System. Having represented Alaskan workers for over 80 years, Teamsters Local 959 cannot overemphasize the value of working people having the option of a defined benefit program and the value it provides working families. As a state, Alaska as well as many of its local communities have struggled – and continues to struggle to attract and retain a strong, dedicated workforce due in part to more attractive retirement benefits elsewhere in the country.

Teamsters Local 959 represents a broad and vibrant cross-section of public employees that include, but are not limited to, school bus drivers and attendants, public transit drivers, food service workers, carpenters, garbage and sanitation workers, plumbers, painters, mechanics, HVAC technicians, and other public employees in the Anchorage and Fairbanks area. Government agencies that employ our members provide a significant amount of time and resources into both training and recruitment, but that investment is often lost due to employee turnover. HB 220 will help recruit and retain public sector employees that are vital to our state and local communities.

We urge the passing of House Bill 220.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Teamsters Local 959

Patrick Fitzgerald
Political Coordinator

PF:jk

042022 House Finance Committee K Merrick, N Foster HB 146 Support Letter

1453 University Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99709 • P (907) 452-2959 • F (907) 450-6181

306 Willoughby, Juneau, AK 99801 • P (907) 586-3225 • F (907) 586-1227

610 Attla Way, Suite 8, Kenai, AK 99611 • P (907) 283-4498 • F (907) 283-8030

1201 Mill Bay Road, Kodiak, AK 99615 • P (907) 486-8818 • F (907) 486-0080

1529 Ocean Drive Ste. 1, Homer, AK 99603 • P (907) 226-5151 • F (907) 235-0656

www.akteamsters.com