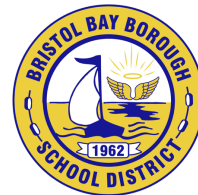




THE BRISTOL BAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Phone: (907) 246-4225/Fax: (907) 246-6875



Alaska State Legislature
Senate Finance Committee

Testimony in Support of SB88

Dear Co-Chairs Stedman, Hoffman, Olson, and Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Bill Hill. I am a lifelong resident of Alaska, committed educator, and currently the future-former Superintendent of the Bristol Bay Borough School District.

I was asked to testify on behalf of SB 88, but due to our small district office am currently tied up in a Food Service audit that will not allow my attendance. Please accept the following written testimony as my perspective on the need to restore an opportunity for educators to earn a pension.

My teaching career began when I left a Davis Bacon pipe-laying job that allowed me to provide for my family; people in my line of work were earning \$80,000/year. My wife Diane and I were committed to raising our four children with one of us at home. When a teaching job came up in my community of Naknek, we had to weigh the loss of income; as a starting teacher I would earn about \$34,000/yr.

There were two incentives that allowed us to justify my move to education. First, healthcare was a priority and education provided top-tier health insurance. Second, education would provide us with a pension that would ensure we were taken care of later in life despite the loss of earning potential that we would endure.

It was very difficult for us to make ends meet with a teacher's salary both in Bush Alaska, and later in Juneau. This meant summers were not a vacation, but a time where I worked in the commercial fishing industry to make ends meet. Later when our children were of school age Diane was able to secure part-time work around school schedules to help us make ends meet.

We are hardworking, fiscally conservative people who did not have any extravagance in our lives. We bought used vehicles, did not take vacations, and lived in what many would consider sub-par housing. A medical event in our lives really put us backward when Diane wasn't able to work for several years. This would have been much worse if we didn't have good health care, but were burdened for years with debt accrued at this time.

After 25 years in education, I will retire in June. The fact that we now have a state pension to support us is extremely important to us. We are thankful for a pension that we can depend on, a pension that recognizes that the hard choices we have made in our fiscal lives that otherwise would not have allowed an amazing career serving the children of Alaska.

"EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN FOR THE FUTURE"

We cannot stabilize our education system without providing educators the safety and security of a good pension. We currently incentivize teachers to leave the state after 5 years of service. At a time when our educators are considering purchasing a house, getting married, or raising a family, the only fiscally responsible thing for them to do is to find a state with a good pension plan.

A part of stopping the brain-drain and educator-drain in our state, I encourage you to replace our Tier III system with one that provides state employees and teachers with a defined benefit pension plan. If we want to keep educators in our great state, we need provide them with some of the same options that allowed me to justify a career in education serving Alaska's students.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Hill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Hill
Superintendent
bhill@bbbsd.net