

Senate Education Committee Supporting Retention and Recruitment - Testimony

**Lon Garrison, Executive Director
Association of Alaska School Boards.**

March 17, 2025

Chair Bjorkman and members of the Senate Labor & Commerce Committee. My name is Lon Garrison. I serve as the Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards. We are a nonprofit association established in 1954, serving 52 of Alaska's 54 school districts. Thank you for this opportunity to speak today in support of **SB88 RETIREMENT SYSTEMS; DEFINED BENEFIT OPTION**.

AASB's Board of Directors has adopted three legislative priorities for this year. They are:

- Sufficient, sustainable, and predictable education funding
- Retention and recruitment of teachers, administrators, and staff
- Student wellness and safety

These priorities and the supporting resolutions and beliefs of the AASB membership are appended to this testimony.

AASB has long supported a return to a defined benefit program as the preferred option for staff retirement investments. In 2005, the AASB membership adopted the following resolution and has maintained its strong support for reconstituting a defined benefit option.

4.7 RELATING TO DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT

AASB supports the establishment of a defined benefit retirement program that improves the hiring and retention of highly qualified and effective staff.

Adopted 2005

Amended 2008, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019

School districts face an unprecedented crisis of retaining and recruiting qualified, effective teachers, administrators, and support staff. This personnel crisis seriously hinders our ability to provide Alaska students with a quality education. It makes it extremely difficult for school boards to fulfill the state's constitutional responsibility to provide a quality public education for every student every day.

As you have heard many times before, one of the single most important determinants of whether a student succeeds in school is the quality of the educator that works with the student. While effective learning requires a high-quality teacher, the entire school system must support that crucial opportunity for that teacher and student to be together. This means a multitude of other staff is needed to make the learning experience the best that it can be.



My colleagues have previously provided you with information and statistics about Alaska's retention, recruitment, and turnover crisis with education staff. That information portrays school districts' challenges in having the staff necessary to fulfill their missions.

Out of curiosity, Yesterday, March 16, I checked the Alaska Teacher Placement website, and it revealed the following startling numbers. A total of 1,481 positions are currently open, of which 360 are teachers, 81 are administrators, 233 are student support services, and the remaining 807 are a variety of positions needed to operate a school district effectively.

This year, school boards across the state are facing some of the most significant challenges they have ever faced in deciding how to allocate rapidly dwindling resources in order to provide a public education. The scarcity of applicants coupled with a lack of adequate education funding results in districts experiencing staff shortages that further exacerbate the crisis. The lack of a defined benefit retirement option is one more strike against Alaska's ability to retain or recruit the public service employees we need.

SB 88 is a common-sense proposal to return to a retirement system that incentivizes educational professionals to invest dedicating their careers to service in Alaska. SB 88 incorporates lessons learned from the past, shares the risk with participants, and establishes retirement age and qualification parameters that are more appropriate for today. SB 88 maintains the current contribution rates by school districts for PERS and TRS, which is a relief. I want to acknowledge that districts, municipalities, and boroughs still struggle with these contributions, given the ever-increasing rise in healthcare costs and liability insurance that have driven dramatic rises in the overall cost of employees.

Last week, during a meeting AASB facilitated between school board members and their legislators, the question was asked by a senator, "what is the difference between spending and investment?" School board members often speak of investment in staff and students. A board member responded, "investment implies an expectation of a beneficial dividend or outcome. Spending is a response to an expense."

Investment in the long-term viability and retention of quality staff is not without risk. However, SB88 is an effort that works to manage that risk while providing a dividend that ensures we can recruit and retain staff, with the ultimate benefit being better student outcomes. AASB urges the Alaska legislature to be bold and responsive. Make Alaska competitive in the public sector employment marketplace. This is an investment in our students, communities, and state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Lon D. Garrison,
Executive Director, AASB



AASB's 2023 Legislative Priorities

On behalf of our member school districts statewide, the AASB Board of Directors has adopted three legislative priorities: **Funding, Educators and Students**. Supporting resolutions can be found in [Where We Stand 2023](#).

Our Mission: The Association of Alaska School Boards advocates for children and youth by assisting school boards in providing quality public education, focused on student achievement, through effective local governance.

Sufficient and Sustainable Public Education Funding

Sufficient, sustainable and stable funding is required to meet Alaska's obligation to provide quality, public education for every Alaska student. Educating Alaska's youth is the best strategy for successfully meeting and safeguarding Alaska's prosperity.

- ▶ **Increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA)** – From 2012 to 2022, the BSA has only increased by \$250 per student (4.2%) while inflation has increased by at least 24% (Anchorage CPI), resulting in crippling staff shortages, school closures, and program eliminations. AASB advocates for not less than an **\$860 increase to the BSA for FY2024**.
- ▶ **Decouple education funding from the General Fund Budget** - Create an Education Permanent Fund/ Endowment to provide reliable, stable, and predictable revenue to school districts.
- ▶ **Prevent cost-shifting of expenses** - Such as transportation, bond-debt reimbursement, major maintenance, and retirement contributions to districts and local communities.

Recruitment and Retention of Teachers, Administrators & Staff

School districts face an unprecedented crisis of retaining and recruiting qualified, effective teachers, administrators, and support staff which seriously hinders providing Alaska students with a quality education.

- ▶ **Implement recommendations** - of the Teacher Recruitment & Retention Task Force.
- ▶ **Reinstitute a competitive retirement program** - including both defined benefits and defined contributions.
- ▶ **Invest in teacher housing** - required for most rural school districts.
- ▶ **Grow Alaska teachers and administrators** - work with partners and the University of Alaska to improve and expand teacher training programs, teacher-mentor programs, and alternative certification pathways.

Student Wellness and School Safety

The pandemic has impacted student wellness for every demographic, especially students experiencing poverty or trauma. Violence, neglect, and sexual abuse have increased, resulting in reduced social-emotional well-being and academic achievement.

- ▶ **Address student mental health** - Support and fund mental health services for all Alaskan students, including trauma-engaged practices in Alaska schools.
- ▶ **Prevent student sexual abuse by school staff** - Support the implementation of policies and training regarding professional boundaries between staff and students.
- ▶ **Reduce school and student violence**. Support and fund the needed programs and services.



Sufficient and Sustainable Public Education Funding

- ▶ B.7 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND FUNDING AS TOP PRIORITY
- ▶ B.10 FUNDING FOR EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN ALASKA
- ▶ 1.4 OPPOSE SCHOOL VOUCHERS
- ▶ 2.1 SUSTAINED, RELIABLE AND ADEQUATE STATE FISCAL PLAN AND EDUCATIONAL FUNDING FOR ALASKA'S STUDENTS THROUGH A NON-VOLATILE FUNDING SOURCE
- ▶ 2.2 URGING EARLY, ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE, AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
- ▶ 2.6 FUNDING FOR EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN ALASKA
- ▶ 2.10 EDUCATION ENDOWMENT
- ▶ 2.14 PUPIL TRANSPORTATION
- ▶ 2.31 URGING THE CONTINUATION OF FUNDING FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL (VOCATIONAL) EDUCATION
- ▶ 2.63 FUNDING FOR EDUCATION AND TRANSPORTATION
- ▶ 2.64 BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION INCREASE: MAKING UP FOR LOST GROUND DUE TO INFLATION

Recruitment and Retention of Teachers, Administrators & Staff

- ▶ 4.3 ALASKA STATEWIDE EDUCATOR MENTORING
- ▶ 4.5 ADDRESSING THE TEACHER, SPECIALIST AND ADMINISTRATOR SHORTAGE
- ▶ 4.6 REPEAL THE SOCIAL SECURITY GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET AND WINDFALL ELIMINATION PROVISION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATORS
- ▶ 4.7 RELATING TO DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT
- ▶ 4.11 ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO CERTIFY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS
- ▶ 4.18 ESTABLISHING A NEW TEACHER INCENTIVE PROGRAM FOR ALASKA

Student Wellness and School Safety

- ▶ B.11 CHILD ADVOCACY MISSION STATEMENT
- ▶ B.14 SUPPORTING SOBRIETY AND SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION
- ▶ B.15 PREVENTION/EARLY INTERVENTION
- ▶ B.17 DECLARING CHILDREN THE TOP PRIORITY OF ALASKA
- ▶ 3.1 DECLARING CHILDREN OF ALASKA OUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE AND THEIR HEALTH, SAFETY, WELFARE, AND EDUCATION IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE
- ▶ 3.3 FETAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG EXPOSED STUDENTS
- ▶ 3.6 OPIATES, INHALANTS, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, E-CIGARETTES/ELECTRONIC DELIVERY SYSTEMS, METHAMPHETAMINES, MARIJUANA, DESIGNER DRUGS AND ANY ILLICIT SUBSTANCE USE
- ▶ 3.8 SUICIDE PREVENTION, EDUCATION AND TREATMENT EFFORTS
- ▶ 3.9 SAFE, CARING AND CONNECTED SCHOOLS
- ▶ 3.10 SUPPORT OF STATE FUNDING FOR STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES IN ALASKA
- ▶ 3.11 HIV/AIDS AND OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STI) EDUCATION
- ▶ 3.12 EDUCATION OF STUDENTS IN RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIORS RELATING TO HUMAN SEXUALITY
- ▶ 3.13 IN SUPPORT OF THE ALASKA CHILDREN'S TRUST
- ▶ 3.15 SUPPORTING THE SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES ACT
- ▶ 3.17 STUDENT WELLNESS
- ▶ 3.21 SUPPORTING EXPANSION OF HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE TO SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES
- ▶ 3.23 SUPPORT OF FULL STATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH REQUIREMENTS
- ▶ 3.25 SUPPORTING SEX ABUSE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION
- ▶ 3.26 SUPPORTING THE ADOPTION OF TRAUMA-INFORMED AND CULTURALLY AFFIRMING PRACTICES
- ▶ 3.27 SUPPORT FOR THE TREATMENT OF ABUSE OF OPIATES
- ▶ 3.28 EDUCATION ON THE DANGERS OF TOBACCO, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS, MARIJUANA USE AND SECONDHAND SMOKE

March 15, 2023

Senator Cathy Giessel
State Capitol Room 427
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Senator Giessel,

Alaska public employees have the worst retirement options in America. Educators, public servants, and public safety officers hired after 2006 are without a pension option, and most don't have access to Social Security benefits. This combination has led TRS III and PERS IV participants to label their retirement plans as the "Death Tier", meaning that they will almost certainly outlive their retirement savings or work until they die.

Alaska's current approach to retirement has led to increased turnover rates, particularly among public school employees. Every year, 20% of teachers, education support staff, and administrators leave their jobs at an annual cost to the state of \$20 million.

Other states offer public employees a shared risk pension system that protects the state while offering career public servants the opportunity to earn a modest pension. Last legislative session, an analysis of HB 220 projected cost savings to the State of Alaska over the first 6 years of offering a defined benefit option to current TRS III/PERS IV employees and new hires. HB 220 underscores the crucial link between increased teacher retention and associated student outcomes.

When I moved to Alaska in June 2006, I entered the KGBSD with high hopes of a promising future, filled with new opportunities to grow as an educator. I gained knowledge about the diversified learners in our district and shared experiences with other special education teachers in order to develop better ways to enhance student learning; however, I was unaware that the TRS III has left educators without a pension option. I knew I'd be working in the KGBSD for at least twenty years, so I didn't understand what this actually meant.

I always felt that upon retirement, I'd be able to enjoy life and not have to stress over "making ends meet" or having health benefits when I retired. Unfortunately, I have become acutely aware of what TRS III means, now that I'm at a place where I'm looking ahead to life after teaching. I'm terrified to learn that I can't guarantee how much I will receive each month after retiring and just as importantly, I won't have health benefits either. I know that the current version of SB 88 still does not include medical benefits upon retirement, but I think this is something that needs to be changed for the sake of making a more attractive retirement plan as well as to take care of the employees who have spent their entire careers taking care of our students.

I have a chronic health condition, type 1 diabetes, and depend on health insurance to help support my ability to afford durable medical equipment to maintain my overall well-being. While

I'm not planning on retiring for a number of years, I need to know and believe that the State of Alaska will do what's best for current TRS III/PERS IV employees and new hires in order to increase teacher retention and associated student outcomes. The current retirement system impacts employees by creating unnecessary stress and mental health issues that prevent them from functioning in the most productive way possible when life beyond retirement seems impossible.

As an Alaskan who wants to remain in our state, please support all legislation to restore a real retirement system which includes **medical benefits upon retirement** for Alaska public employees.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Danielle Dolsky", is written over a horizontal line.

Danielle Dolsky

Special Education Teacher

Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District

From: [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)
To: [Julia OConnor](#)
Subject: FW: DB Bill
Date: Thursday, March 16, 2023 1:32:57 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: Kathie Yoder <kathie.yoder@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2023 12:36 PM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: DB Bill

I have two daughters who are ASD teachers. They are experienced and highly qualified and are also looking for other career options. Why? Because the current Defined Contributions system does not provide them with a secure retirement. They love their students, and they love teaching, but they have to look out for themselves as well.

I know they are not the only ones looking for a new career. Can the SOA afford to replace them in a time of National teacher shortages? Are we able to attract business to Alaska without first rate schools?

Thank you for standing up for our public school teachers.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Stefanie Kondro](#)
To: [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)
Cc: [Julia OConnor](#); [Rep. Louise Stutes](#); [Sen. Gary Stevens](#)
Subject: Restore a Real Retirement for Alaska Public Employees
Date: Sunday, March 19, 2023 8:41:19 AM

Dear Honorable members,

I have been a public school educator in Alaska for over 10 years. Every year, exceptional teachers are hired and move to Alaska. There were seven new hires just in my school this year, all from out of state, some even from a foreign country. I have watched these exceptional teachers leave year after year. Every year, 20% of teachers, education support staff, and administrators leave their jobs at an annual cost to the state of \$20 million. The turnover rate is outrageous. Our students are missing out. We need to keep quality teachers in our schools. Fixing the retirement system is one crucial step we need to take action on.

As an Alaskan who wants to remain in our state, please support all legislation to restore a real retirement system for Alaska public employees.

Sincerely,

Stefanie Kondro
2267 Forest Dr Kodiak, AK 99615-7227
stefaniekondro@gmail.com

From: [Jennifer EF](#)
To: [Senate Labor and Commerce](#)
Cc: [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#); [Julia OConnor](#); [Rep. Craig Johnson](#)
Subject: Letter of Support for SB 88
Date: Thursday, March 16, 2023 4:54:41 PM

Good afternoon,

Thank you for your consideration of SB 88. I would also like to thank my Alaska senator, Cathy Giessel, for introducing this Bill. I support SB 88 as an Alaskan educator for over 10 years and as a parent of an Alaskan elementary school student. I completed my M.A. in Teaching from UAA in May 2006 and was hired in September 2006. I am currently working on my M.Ed. in Educational Leadership at UAS. If SB 88 were to pass, it would be a great reason to stay and end my career here in Alaska and raise our son here. I appreciate your consideration. I hope you will support this Bill.

Thank you again,

Jennifer Edwards-Fahl
Jennifer.ce@gmail.com
(907) 310-5523

Greetings,

My Name is Eric Wolf, I am Investigator from a rural Alaska Police Department, one of many sprinkled throughout Alaska. I am assigned to the regional drug task force, I am the departments breath alcohol testing supervisor, I fill in patrol when the schedule needs it, I am a department field training officer, I am also trained and assigned to the department entry and sniper teams. The list of my work duties and qualifications goes on and on.

With working in a small rural borough, I am afforded the opportunity to work in one capacity or another with almost all my fellow borough employees as well as the state workers in my community and many other neighboring communities that SB88 effects.

My family and I returned to SE Alaska after retiring from military service 7 years ago. My wife and I returned to the state we love, to raise our little family here. My wife is from here and I am transplant that moved here after we met here while I was working in the fishing industry some many years ago.

But as we eye the future it is getting harder and harder to envision being able to retire here. With the poor performance of the plan the last few years and despite supplementing the state's current tier 4 retirement system by investing an additional 20% of my income in the Boroughs supplementary 457 account it still looks like the wiser investment it to take my skills outside of Alaska like so many of my co-workers and colleagues have with great success. And my job field does not hold exclusive rights to this trend, all of our state and borough positions seem to be plagued by the same issue. What makes it worse is, that many of those that leave are vocal about why they have left their home state. This hurts recruiting in those respective fields as well.

I like many, we love the state where we call home, and have no plans to leave anytime soon. But I like many are perfectly aware that a secure retirement future working for a government entity in the state of Alaska is anything but secure. Many of the of the state and borough employees I know, especially in teaching and law enforcement are constantly looking for right time to make their exodus.

Many of those employees are leaving to relocate to a state with a defined benefit plan. They are staying in the respective career fields but are looking for a state that is interested in a future where they retain their knowledgeable and skilled coworkers.

The ones that are remaining hold on by a thread of hope that something will be done with retention so they don't feel like they the only one foolish enough to stay working in a place that they know they will have no hope in staying in due to the cost of living and poor financial outlook that the current system provides them with. Many have looked at their leaving as it is better to leave and maybe return when they retire from a healthy retirement system then to be forced to leave in their elder years when they try to retire and realize all their years of dedicated work has left them with no means to retire in the places, they call home.

I have watched our State and Borough loose so many skilled, quality people in the last 7 years it is unfathomable, only for the positions they left become harder to fill, it is seriously discouraging.

It is long past time that the great state of Alaska right the wrong and pass a bill for a responsible pension-based retirement to retain its highly skilled and fiercely loyal, dedicated employees. We need to do everything we can to retain those employees and entice new ones into working for State and the Boroughs that make it up.

So, in ending I ask that you all find a way to help Alaska retain Alaskans in the workforce and in retirement, by passing and ratifying SB88.

Thank you for your time,

Eric Wolf

(Officer/Investigator Petersburg Police Department)

From: [Heather Roach](#)
To: [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)
Cc: [Julia OConnor](#)
Subject: SB 88
Date: Saturday, March 18, 2023 2:30:10 AM

Hello,

My name is Heather Roach and I am a 28-year veteran teacher for the Anchorage School District. I am writing in support of reestablishing a defined benefit retirement system for my Tier III and future colleagues. Providing a secure retirement for Alaska's public employees must be a priority if we hope to provide quality education to our students.

Having a qualified teacher in the classroom is the number one indicator for student success. In my 28 years of teaching I have witnessed too many excellent educators choose to leave education due to the lack of a solid retirement system. This year, two of my immediate colleagues are leaving education to pursue opportunities that will help provide security in their retirement. This hurts our students. This hurts Alaska.

Becoming an effective educator takes time. If Alaska wants to provide the best possible education experience for our students, then Alaska needs to invest in our educators. Our students need educators who are dedicated to the profession for the long term. There is an inverse relationship between teacher turnover and student success - schools with a high teacher turnover (such as the Title I school where I teach) have the lowest student achievement. Teacher turnover also costs money - money that could be directed toward salaries, benefits, and quality curriculum.

Please reestablish a defined benefit system for Alaska teachers. Our students and our state will thank you.

Respectfully,

Heather Roach
2017 BP Teacher of the Year - Anchorage
Science Teacher - Anchorage School District

From: [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)
To: [Julia OConnor](#)
Subject: Fwd: SB 88
Date: Saturday, March 18, 2023 2:40:48 PM

Best regards,
Cathy

Senator Cathy Giessel
Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov
907.465.4843

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Peggy Benton <peggybenton30@gmail.com>
Date: March 18, 2023 at 7:06:18 AM AKDT
To: "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: SB 88

March 18, 2023

Dear Senator Kathy Giessel,

My name is Peggy Benton and I live in Eagle River Alaska and work in the Anchorage School District. I am a music teacher at Ptarmigan Elementary School in Anchorage. I have been teaching there for over 15 years.

When I started teaching it was the year the retirement changed to the Tier III plan. I love my job; however, the lack of a strong retirement plan is forcing me to consider a different job. Alaska has the worst retirement system in the nation for Tier III and Tier IV hires. I have seen many qualified and amazing teachers leave the state or change careers because of the terrible retirement that is set up for teachers.

Alaska has so many unfilled positions and a strong pension would be a great incentive for new hires. This lack of a stable teaching workforce has a negative effect on our student's learning.

I strongly urge you to consider passing SB 88.

Thank you for your consideration.

Peggy Benton
Classroom Music Specialist

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From: [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)
To: [Julia OConnor](#)
Subject: FW: Senate Bill 88
Date: Friday, March 17, 2023 5:12:22 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: Annarose Miller <nolephlipper@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2023 3:35 PM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senate Bill 88

Dear Cathy,

I am writing to express my support for reinstating a defined benefit plan to state public employees. As a special education employee in Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, I am seeing first hand how we are not able to attract and retain special education teachers or therapists to the school district. We have so much need, and our students deserve good teachers who will stay! I myself have a caseload nearly twice the national average, and despite recruiting my district has open positions for SpED staff and specialists this year and likely next year. Our kids are at risk for lessened service provision despite our best efforts, and the rest of us are at danger of burning out! Alaska kids deserve the best!

Consider this my heartfelt two cents on this topic.
Sincerely,
Noelle Miller, MA CCC-SLP

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)
To: [Julia OConnor](#)
Subject: Fwd: Senate Bill 88
Date: Friday, March 17, 2023 7:59:16 PM

Best regards,
Cathy

Senator Cathy Giessel
Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov
907.465.4843

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Larisa Manewal <28fathom@gmail.com>
Date: March 17, 2023 at 5:51:58 PM AKDT
To: "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Cc: Julia OConnor <Julia.OConnor@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senate Bill 88

Chair, members of the committee:

For the record, my name is Larisa Manewal. I am from Sitka and am currently working as a teacher in my hometown.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am here in support of Senate Bill 88.

The Tier III retirement system ensures that Alaska is not competitive with other states. This coupled with no social security benefits, a local housing scarcity, and rising cost of living give me pause about my ability to remain in my hometown as an educator.

We are experiencing high levels of turnover at our school, some of which can be mitigated by making the profession more attractive as a long-term career by returning to a pension plan.

Please support Senate Bill 88 to retain current teachers and invest in future educators.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

From: [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)
To: [Julia OConnor](#)
Subject: FW: Support for SB 88
Date: Friday, March 17, 2023 7:24:15 AM

From: cozylog@alaska.net <cozylog@alaska.net>
Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2023 9:38 PM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Cc: Sen. Jesse Kiehl <Sen.Jesse.Kiehl@akleg.gov>
Subject: Support for SB 88

Senator:

I support SB 88 because I have seen firsthand the impacts of public employee turnover in my community. My Department (DOT&PF) had 2 unique and highly qualified positions that were never filled after we retired and I know of at least two of my colleagues who are leaving due to the broken retirement system.

The impacts that high vacancies have on the ability of public agencies to offer public services, and our ability to confidently offer needed services to the Alaskan public and look forward to retirement are not just word play – they are real people who have gone away because of the retirement system.

My wife and I hope the Defined Benefits program is brought back so that the state doesn't lose more good people.

Respectfully,
L, Bruce and Judy Bowler
PO Box 32719
Juneau, AK 99803

From: [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)
To: [Julia OConnor](#)
Subject: FW: Education in Alaska
Date: Friday, March 17, 2023 5:09:15 PM

From: Tonia Kushin <toniakushin@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2023 4:31 PM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: Education in Alaska

Thank you, Senator Giessel, for your dedicated work. My name is Tonia Kushin and our family lives in Wasilla. I have two children, currently in high school. Students in our community deserve to have highly qualified teachers who support students' individual learning goals. Additionally, our students deserve to have teachers who have the years of experience (helping to make them highly qualified in classroom management strategies) needed to become solid teachers and who want to stay in Alaska. In order to help accomplish this the state needs to help fix the retirement system here in Alaska. I support Senate Bill 88 to restore teacher pensions as well as a significant increase in the BSA and urge you to consider current and future students' education as the decisions on these bills are made.

Tonia Kushin & Family

From: [Brendan Harrington](#)
To: [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)
Cc: [Sen. Gary Stevens](#); [Julia OConnor](#)
Subject: Letter of support for SB 88
Date: Friday, March 17, 2023 6:07:31 PM

My name is Brendan Harrington and I am a high school teacher and commercial fisherman in Kodiak. I am writing to express my support for SB 88. It is imperative that we restore a workable retirement system for Alaska's public school teachers so that we may attract and retain quality teachers in the state. Nationwide, teachers already earn roughly 75% of the salary of other college-educated professionals. We must pinch pennies and work seasonal jobs to pick up some of the slack around the edges, but all of the frugality in the world is not enough to guarantee our well-being once we reach retirement age. This is especially true in rural areas with our higher cost of living. There was a time when the state provided enough incentives to ensure our futures as well as the futures of all of our children., Over the years, however, the rights of Alaskan teachers to feel secure in their old age have been allowed to slip slowly away. It's time to right the ship.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brendan Harrington

From: [Carrie Dershin](#)
To: [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#); [Julia OConnor](#)
Subject: Please support SB 88
Date: Friday, March 17, 2023 7:21:16 PM

Dear Esteemed Members of the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee,

My name is Carrie Dershin and I live in Fairbanks. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 88. I have worked for just over 10 years in the FNSBSD as a school counselor. I am Tier III TRS. I am 53 years old and suffice it to say that my retirement benefits as an educator in Alaska is really depressing. When I think ahead to my own retirement, it concerns me that I will not have the resources to maintain a healthy and safe landing pad that will be viable. It has certainly caused me to wonder whether it would be more prudent to leave the state now in search of more sound teacher retirement plans while I am still employable. What most breaks my heart, however, is that my daughter, a recent graduate of the UAF education program, and her fiance who is studying Special Education, left Alaska to teach elsewhere because they did not see a sustainable financial future for themselves here. She is in her first year of teaching and enrolled in a Master's program in Gifted Education in Ohio. There is an exodus of dynamic, young educators out of Alaska. A brain drain. At a time when there are record unfilled teaching positions in the state, we cannot continue to lose our best and brightest new teachers who truly love Alaska, but Alaska does show love to them. Please restore our pension. Please pass Senate Bill 88, invest in our educators and invest in our children.

Thank you for your time, and the important work you do for the people of Alaska,

Carrie Dershin

Sent from my iPhone