

From: Beau Ward <bward@pcsd.us>
Sent: Thursday, April 9, 2026 11:54 AM
To: Assembly <assembly@petersburgak.gov>
Subject: Support for HB 78

Hello Assembly Members,

Thank you for considering a resolution in support of House Bill 78. I wanted to offer a personal perspective from a teacher who has been teaching in Petersburg now for 19 years. I started teaching in Alaska in 2004, so my retirement plan is part of the Tier II teacher retirement which includes a pension and medical benefits. This retirement plan is one of the main reasons I stayed in Alaska after coming to teach for a short term "Alaska adventure." Settling into Petersburg and becoming a significant contributor to our school and ultimately community took time, but Petersburg was a good fit for my family both personally and financially, making the commitment a responsible one. I can't say the same for younger teachers in our district who are at the same point I was almost two decades ago. A choice to stay in Alaska and make a career of teaching is also a choice to have one of the least reliable professional retirement options in the US. For these teachers, the struggles of living in a high cost community while low on the salary scale don't pay off with long term retirement security.

In my own family, both my wife, who is also a teacher but under the current Tier III teacher retirement plan, and I will be dependent upon my retirement plan. Though she saves significantly more than just the employer contributions, her retirement lacks the benefits or certainty that mine does. Without my retirement plan, it would be a bad financial decision for her to be here. If I were under the same retirement plan also, neither of us would have stayed in Petersburg or Alaska. We both give a lot to our school and community, so it has been a good thing for us and Petersburg that I'm grandfathered into the Tier II teacher retirement, allowing us to be here.

Petersburg and much of Alaska have benefitted from families like mine that have moved in and stayed because it is a good choice for us to raise our families and spend our careers here. However, the situation has changed for colleagues younger than me, and being here means making a choice despite the teacher retirement plan instead of that being a reason to stay, like it was for me.

House Bill 78 addresses this problem by creating a pension that makes us competitive with other states. I would encourage you to support the bill because I want my younger colleagues to know that being here is a good financial choice, and I want our district to attract great teachers for me to continue to work with and ultimately take my place when I retire.

Thank you for your consideration,

Beau Ward