



# ROB STAFSHOLT

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**DATE: December 6, 2023**

**RE: Testimony on Senate Bill 573**

**TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety**

**FROM: Senator Rob Stafsholt**

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Thank you Chairman Wanggaard and committee members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety for hearing Senate Bill 573.

Under current law, officer recruits for law enforcement agencies, jails, or juvenile detention facilities are mandated to have 24 hours of recertification training per year, which can range between \$1,000 and \$3,000. After this training is completed, the Law Enforcement Standards Board (LESB) authorizes reimbursement by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to be issued to local governments. The local governments then in turn issues this to their law enforcement agencies after the training is completed.

The most recent state budget provided a secure funding source for these payments and enough resources to cover a doubling of the rate from the current minimum amount of \$160 to \$320 per officer. This bill matches that commitment from the budget in state law, ensuring our local departments receive at least \$320 per officer going forward. The bill also makes sure these funds are sent directly to the law enforcement agencies, instead of through a local government middle-man.

Today, our local officers are in need of updated training to match the growing demands for safe communities. This bill significantly helps this by ensuring we have the best trained and most qualified law enforcement officers.

We have also authored a simple amendment, which matches the date that departments are able to receive these funds to when the funds are available.

Again, thank you Chairman Wanggaard and committee members for allowing me to submit testimony on SB 573. I would also like to thank Representative Donovan for his work on this legislation. I would appreciate your support on this bill and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



# BOB DONOVAN

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December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 573

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety for hearing public testimony on Senate Bill 573 which doubles the training reimbursement rates for Wisconsin law enforcement officers.

Our police undergo extensive training to ensure they are adequately ready to protect themselves and the citizens they serve. Although this training is broad, annual training requirements are mandated by Wisconsin statute to ensure our law enforcement are constantly learning and improving. These 24 hours of annual training are vital to continued education, but come at a high financial cost.

There is no doubt that we all feel the strain of the rising cost of living as everything is more expensive. The same goes for our law enforcement. Currently, the Department of Justice (DOJ) reimburses departments \$160 per law enforcement officer. In contrast, training costs for officers can range from \$1,000 to \$3,000 annually. This legislation seeks to double that reimbursement rate from \$160 to \$320 therefore easing some of the financial burden on our law enforcement departments. The biennial budget provided a secure funding source for these payments and this legislation seeks to utilize them.

Additionally, a clarification in state statute language will ensure that our law enforcement departments receive these payments directly. This prevents municipalities from withholding funds that should be given to the departments themselves.

An amendment was submitted, in collaboration with the DOJ, which offered only technical changes and did not alter the intent of the bill. As originally drafted, the bill did not account for the funding increases provided by the biennial budget which does not occur until the second year of the biennium. The amendment simply adds a delayed effective date of training received on or after July 1, 2024 to ensure the DOJ has the additional funds to send out these increased payments.

Wisconsin's law enforcement groups understand the importance of this change and have fully supported this proposal. This simple bill allows our departments to continue the good work of keeping officers trained and qualified for the most difficult situations. Rising prices affect not only our wallets, but our local governments and public safety departments. Committee members, please join me in supporting this common sense piece of legislation – Senate Bill 573. I would be happy to respond to any questions or concerns about the legislation.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Donovan".

Bob Donovan  
State Representative – 84<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



December 6, 2023

To: Chairman Wanggaard and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

From: Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association

Re: Support Senate Bill 573, Training expenses for officers

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Chairman Wanggaard, thank you for your willingness to hold a hearing on this legislation. We would also like to thank Senator Stafsholt and Representative Donovan for authoring this legislation.

Additionally, we would like to thank committee member Senator James for his support in cosponsoring this incredibly important piece of legislation.

For background, Wisconsin currently mandates 24 hours of training per year for every officer. Training costs can range from \$1,000 to \$3,000 per officer. The Wisconsin Department of Justice reimburses a portion of these expenses, but it is not sufficient to support the academy and recertification costs our departments are mandated to provide. To put it more simply, every time a police department sends an officer for training, the department actually loses money to have that officer better trained.

Senate Bill 573 increases this reimbursement amount for training from \$160 to \$320. The biennial state budget, 2023 Wisconsin Act 19, provided a secure funding source and enough resources to cover the increased payments. With passage of this proposal, the training fund increase will be cemented in state statute ensuring that all departments benefit from the increase, both now and into the future.

Before the passage of the recently enacted shared revenue overhaul, the reimbursements were funded from the Penalty Surcharge Account. For many years, this account has been operating in deficit. This increasing structural deficit grew from \$1.4 million in 2008 to \$23 million in 2022. Now, the training fund reimbursements will be funded using general-purpose revenue.

In recent years there has been a growing focus on the amount and type of training law enforcement officials receive. Adequate and timely training for officers increases public safety for all. This legislation further assists departments, so they have adequate resources



to train and staff the best individuals with a wide variety of skills to keep our communities safe.

An increased reimbursement for officer training funds has been the top priority for the WCPA and other law enforcement support organizations because we recognize the value of a well-trained force. That is why the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association joined the Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association, Badger State Sheriffs Association, and the Fraternal Order of Police in supporting this critically needed piece of legislation.

This legislation has broad bipartisan support with nearly half of the Legislature as sponsors of the proposal, and we hope this committee passes this legislation as well.

Thank you again for your attention to this matter and I would be happy to take questions at this time.