



WILLIAM PENTERMAN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 37TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

(608) 266-9650
Toll-Free: (888) 534-0037
Rep.Penterman@legis.wisconsin.gov

P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953

January 12, 2022

Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Testimony from Rep. William Penterman in favor of AB 837

Chairman Spiros and members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 837, relating to grants for law enforcement officer recruiting and bonuses for law enforcement officers.

Very few professions demand the level of physical and mental toughness, professionalism, integrity, courage, and humanity necessary to be a law enforcement officer. Our law enforcement officers put their lives on the line to protect their communities, and we owe them a debt of gratitude and respect.

Unfortunately, crime is on the rise in Wisconsin and the total number of law enforcement officers on our streets is at the lowest level in a decade. This bill seeks to reverse these trends.

AB 837 utilizes ARPA funds to provide \$5,000 bonuses to all new law enforcement officers in Wisconsin. As an added bonus, the bill provides an additional \$1,000 per year of experience to officers who relocate to Wisconsin from out of state. The signing bonus is capped at \$10,000 and officers would be required to remain employed in the field for at least three years.

To show our appreciation to officers already serving in our communities, the bill requires agencies to provide \$2,000 bonuses to every full-time officer they employ. The state, using ARPA funds, would provide \$1,000 and the local municipality would provide \$1,000. Any officer with at least one year of employment with their respective agency would be eligible.

According to a 2019 survey¹ conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum, local governments say that out of nearly 40 different jobs cited, policing jobs are the hardest to fill. Since then, the problem has only gotten worse.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing About It,
<https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>



January 12, 2022

To: Chairman Spiros and Members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

From: Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association

Re: Support Assembly Bill 837, Recruitment and Retention Bonuses

Chairman Spiros, thank you for your willingness to hold a hearing on this bill. We would also like to thank the Assembly authors Representative Penterman and Behnke for introducing this important bill. We are also appreciative of our lead Senate author Senator Roth.

We urge support of Assembly Bill 837, as well as the full legislative package aimed at helping recruit and retain more officers here in Wisconsin. We are appreciative of the leadership of Speaker Vos and legislative Republicans for working with law enforcement from across the state on important policy solutions like this bill. We hope these bills can gain bipartisan support.

Wisconsin currently has the lowest number of officers on our streets in at least a decade. With crime rising in many of our cities, the decreasing number of applicants for positions and officers on the street are both concerning trends. In our recent December survey of members, we were provided dozens of examples of departments large and small, urban and rural, that are challenged by the current staffing situation.

By providing bonuses to all new law enforcement officers in our state, departments can better incentivize individuals interested in the profession to apply or move to our communities. With the additional funds being provided to experienced officers from other states, Wisconsin can hopefully replenish the profession with qualified officers who know how to perform their jobs at a high level.

At the same time that departments are struggling to find applicants for vacant positions, officers are also leaving the profession in higher numbers. The bonus payments to retain officers will go a long way to recognizing the work our current employees do every day to keep our communities safe.

The Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association supports all additional measures that help our agencies employ the best and most qualified officers. This bill is another positive change that will assist this cause, and ensure we continue to keep our communities safe.

We would be happy to take any questions regarding this legislation



To: Members, Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
From: Badger State Sheriffs' Association
Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association
Date: January 12, 2022
**RE: Testimony in support of
AB 831, AB 832, AB 833, AB 834, and AB 837**

Chairman Spiros, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kurt Picknell, and I am the Walworth County Sheriff as well as an active member of both the Badger State Sheriffs' Association and the Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association. Our organizations represent all of Wisconsin's 72 Sheriffs and over 1,000 deputies, corrections officers (jailers) and emergency communications dispatchers.

Across the state, we are facing an extraordinary decline in individuals joining and staying in law enforcement and public safety. A June survey of nearly 200 departments by the Police Executive Research Forum shows a startling 45% increase in the retirement rate and a nearly 20% increase in resignations in 2020-21 compared to the previous year. This concerning pattern continues during an uptick in crime across the state and nation with societal rhetoric devaluing the public safety profession.

There are multiple reasons influencing qualified applicants away from a career in public safety, leaving agencies to address unprecedented vacancies that drives overtime spending and increases the demand for current staff to work more scheduled shifts. To recruit and retain quality law enforcement professionals, we must refocus our efforts to ensure officers are invested in by their communities – this includes training, incentives, and the overall reconstruction of the positive highly valued role of policing in our society.

Before I make additional comments on each of the bills, I want to make sure the committee understands the scope of the issues our agencies are facing. We support the bills put before you today, but we urge the committee to consider expanding the scope to two other important public safety positions: emergency communications dispatchers and county correctional officers (jailers). Many counties across the state have faced shortages in these areas – which provide critical support for local police, county law enforcement and overall public safety. Specifically, we ask the committee to consider amending AB 837, AB 831 and AB832, which would provide grants and other related recruiting and training costs for law enforcement officer recruiting and bonuses for law enforcement officers, to include emergency communications dispatchers and county correctional officers (jailers).

In addition to AB 837, below are other comments on the bills before you today:

- AB 831 (marketing campaign): Law enforcement agencies need additional support to recruit new employees noted above. Across the state, agencies are putting up billboards,

holding informational forums at tech colleges and seeking qualified applicants from other jurisdictions. AB 831 will support and enhance these local efforts by dedicating \$1 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for a “Pro-Cop Wisconsin” marketing campaign.

- AB 832 (training reimbursement): Current state resources continue to be insufficient to cover all the costs associated law enforcement training. This bill directs federal funds to reimburse local and county governments for the preparatory and recertification training for their officers.
- AB 833 (part-time law enforcement): Law enforcement agencies, especially smaller agencies, will utilize part-time officers as a key element of their workforce. However, the costs to onboard, train and outfit part-time officers can be a barrier. This bill will support those smaller agencies in hiring part-time officers.
- AB 834 (search warrants): Under limited circumstances, law enforcement officers will seek judicial authority to execute no-knock search warrants. This legislation prevents local entities from abolishing this tool and ensures it can be utilized in those extremely high-risk situations.

These bills are an important step to recruit and retain quality public safety professionals. It is essential that the Wisconsin public recognizes that we must prioritize and appreciate those that risk their lives to protect the public.

On behalf of BSSA/WS&DSA, I appreciate this opportunity to speak on this critical issue. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.



Department of Administration
Intergovernmental Relations Division

Tom Barrett
Mayor

Sharon Robinson
Director of Administration

Kimberly Montgomery
Director of Intergovernmental Relations

City of Milwaukee Testimony on AB 832, Relating to: increasing the law enforcement reimbursement; AB 834, Relating to: no-knock search warrants and certain expenditures of federal monies of first class cities; and AB 837 Relating to: grants for law enforcement officer recruiting and bonuses for law enforcement officers.

Thank you, Chairman Spiros, and fellow members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, for the opportunity to provide testimony on AB 832, AB 834, and AB 837 on behalf of the City of Milwaukee.

The City of Milwaukee Supports AB 832, relating to increasing the law enforcement reimbursement. The City of Milwaukee commits a significant amount of resources toward the training of our more than 1,600 law enforcement officers. The cost to the City for training costs far outweighs the reimbursement that the City receives from the State. The training and recertification of law enforcement officers remains an essential aspect of both enhancing the public safety of our residents as well as ensuring our officers are training in the most up-to-date techniques. The State of Wisconsin has underfunded municipalities through inadequate shared revenue for far too long. This has forced cities like Milwaukee to face difficult financial decisions to maintain essential services for our residents. By increasing the reimbursement for new law enforcement hires and recertification of current officers, this legislation will help Milwaukee afford the significant costs of ongoing law enforcement training.

The City of Milwaukee opposes AB 834, relating to no-knock search warrants and certain expenditures of federal monies of first class cities. This legislation is another prime example of supposed "local control" being overridden by the Legislature. The Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission, after significant community and law enforcement input, and public discussion, voted in a public meeting on Nov. 18th to outlaw no-knock search warrants. The intention under Wis Stat §62.50 is for cities of the first class to have a community led board of commissioners who may proscribe policies and standards for the police and fire departments. Milwaukee's independent Fire and Police Commission determined that it was appropriate to ban no-knock search warrants in the City of Milwaukee. Reversing this decision through AB 834 is a move in the wrong direction and is a direct disregard of the authority and independence of Fire and Police Commissions throughout the State.

The City of Milwaukee currently spends over \$280 million in general purpose funds on the Milwaukee Police, over 40% of the City of Milwaukee entire budget. AB 834 would require Milwaukee to spend the same percentage of our Federal relief dollars on law enforcement as well, an additional \$157.6 million of ARPA funds. This is yet again another example of the Legislature spurning the idea of "local control" by directing only the City of Milwaukee on how it should use its federal relief money. Additionally, under direction from the United States



Wisconsin State Lodge *Fraternal Order of Police*



PO Box 206 West Bend, WI 53095

Ryan Windorff
President

Shane Wrucke
Secretary

January 12, 2022

Wisconsin Fraternal Order of Police Testimony in Support of Assembly Bills 831, 832, 833, 834, 837

Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

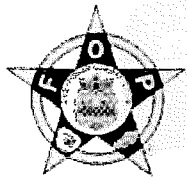
Thank you, Representative Spiros and fellow committee members, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Assembly Bills 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 837. My name is Ryan Windorff, and I am the President of the Wisconsin State Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police.

The law enforcement profession in many areas of our country, including Wisconsin, is at a tipping point. We are seeing record numbers of officers retiring at the first opportunity they can, officers resigning prior to retirement to enter the private sector, and the lowest number of new officers entering the profession in a decade. There are many reasons for these trends, not the least of which is the erosion of respect for law enforcement coupled with public figures promoting anti-police rhetoric and efforts to defund departments. Additionally, the starting salaries of law enforcement officers often does not reflect the increasing educational qualifications we demand of our officers. All of this with the recognition that law enforcement is an increasingly dangerous profession. This past year, violence directed at law enforcement officers surged. In 2021, 346 officers were shot in the line of duty, 63 of whom were killed by gunfire. There were 103 ambush-style attacks on law enforcement officers last year, which was an increase of 115% from 2020, and resulted in 130 officers being shot. Thirty of those officers were killed.

I have been contacted by many officers and had countless conversations about what is going on in our country, our state, and our communities. I have heard several officers that I know and respect tell me that they were considering leaving law enforcement because it is "no longer worth it". No longer worth it to work the hours they do, no longer worth it to sacrifice time with family and friends, no longer worth it to risk their lives to help complete strangers, and no longer worth it to deal with the worst our society has to offer when the public no longer supports them or even WANTS them.

I understand why one would have these feelings, and can empathize with them, however I personally have never been MORE PROUD to be a law enforcement officer. Who else would continue doing their jobs while being screamed at, spit on, villainized in the media and by some elected officials, and called "bastards" "racists" and many more labels. It takes a special kind of person to do that and continue to hold the line, and that's what we are.

We want officers to know that they are appreciated by the honest and law-abiding community members they



Wisconsin State Lodge *Fraternal Order of Police*



PO Box 206 West Bend, WI 53095

Ryan Windorff
President

Shane Wrucke
Secretary

swore to protect. We want our young people to know that law enforcement is still a noble profession and that the people of our state value and appreciate those who dedicate their lives to it. We want people with diverse backgrounds looking for career changes to be financially able to make the change by allowing them to attend a law enforcement academy. And we want to recruit the best and the brightest officers from across the country to join us in Wisconsin, where we have the best trained and highest quality law enforcement in the country.

AB831, AB832, and AB837 would make great strides in correcting this dangerous direction we are heading. This legislation will show citizens of Wisconsin young and old, existing Wisconsin officers, and out of state officers that Wisconsin values their law enforcement officers and is willing to make an investment in them.

AB833 would provide much needed funding for smaller departments to onboard and equip part-time officers. In many areas of our state part-time officers are an essential part of providing law enforcement services to the community. These officers work patrol, special events, secure our courtrooms, perform prisoner transports, and other duties the same as full-time officers, budget constraints often mean that they are equipped with outdated and inferior equipment or required to purchase their own equipment. A properly fit ballistic vest alone can cost more than \$1,000 and needs to be replaced every five years. The Wisconsin FOP has for years administered a ballistic vest program where we purchase and equip officers with custom tailored ballistic vests if their departments do not supply them. Nearly all of the recipients of ballistic vests through this program have been part-time officers. Additionally, funding in this bill can be used by agencies to pay for physical exams, drug tests, and pre-employment psychological exams to ensure that these officers are fit for duty.

AB834 would restrict a county or municipality, a board of fire and police commissioners, a sheriff or chief, or mayor or common council from restricting a law enforcement officer's ability to seek or execute an unannounced or "no-knock" search warrant. No-knock search warrants are a necessary tool for law enforcement when certain dangerous circumstances arise. As someone who has executed hundreds of search warrants in my career, including no-knock search warrants, I can assure you that the safety of civilians and law enforcement personnel is the top priority when planning these complex operations. Although it is preferable to mitigate threats that would justify a no-knock warrant, sometimes it is unavoidable to meet an immediate law enforcement objective. There has been much discussion about no-knock search warrants after recent high-profile incidents but no collective data about their use and their outcomes. We previously testified in support of AB329 that would collect data on the use of no-knock warrants throughout the state. The data collected through the passage of that bill would be instrumental in fostering an honest, fact-based discussion about their prevalence and application. Arbitrarily banning the use of no-knock warrants, as we have seen in at least one city in Wisconsin, only endangers the lives of officers and citizens. This bill is imperative to preserve this tool for officers putting their lives on the line to arrest violent criminals and maintain consistency throughout our state.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.