



RACHAEL A. CABRAL-GUEVARA

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 55TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Representative Rachael Cabral-Guevara

January 5th, 2022

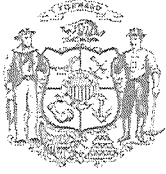
Thank you Chairman Spiros and committee members for allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 777 today, a straightforward bill created to combat increasing levels of crimes in the State of Wisconsin.

Crime has been on a steady rise in the past two years across the state. Assault, murder, carjacking and drug related crimes are all increasing without any indication of them dying down. Shots fired incidents in Madison alone have almost doubled since 2019, murders have almost tripled. While there is certainly a platform in the future to discuss other options to prevent crime, we must look to implement policies that will stop or deter crime now. Law enforcement agencies across the state are bleeding for our help. This bill provides exactly that.

Additionally, this bill will remove the cap on the program funding, allowing for a conversation to be had about the efficacy of how we distribute funds for law enforcement agencies across the state. Furthermore, this bill will increase transparency from law enforcement agencies, heightening the reporting requirements to the DOJ on how the funds are allocated.

The most attractive aspect about this bill is the pragmatism of it. The entirety of the \$10 million increase that is being proposed over the biennium, to be added to the officer grant program, can all be paid through our state's ARPA funds. This, in turn, will not warrant an increase of taxes or an allocation within our state budget. One of the stated uses for ARPA funds is to improve public safety, which most certainly applies in this case. One of, if not the primary responsibility we have as legislators is to promote the general welfare of our constituents and communities. These past two years have shown that our police officers are stretched thin and have struggled to contain this crime wave. By supporting this bill, we will be providing necessary and much needed resources to law enforcement agencies to carry out their responsibilities.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify on this important piece of legislation, I hope you consider supporting AB777. I would be happy to answer any questions you or any committee members may have.



ANDRÉ JACQUE

STATE SENATOR • 1ST SENATE DISTRICT

Phone: (608) 266-3512

Fax: (608) 282-3541

Sen.Jacque@legis.wi.gov

State Capitol - P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
State Senator André Jacque
January 5, 2022*

Chairman Spiros and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of Assembly Bill 777 to provide vital additional resources for law enforcement in our communities.

Public safety is a priority across Wisconsin. Law enforcement agencies throughout our state face challenges that vary depending on the region, county, or municipality. To address these issues, it is imperative that we give our law enforcement the resources they need to keep communities safe.

Law enforcement have been stretched thin in recent years due to an increase in violent crime. Homicides are up. Aggravated assaults are up. Drug abuse has increased, especially with heroin, opiates and methamphetamines.

The Wisconsin Department of Justice currently administers a Law Enforcement Grant Program where 10 municipalities across the state share about \$2 million in grant funding.

Assembly Bill 777 amends the current law enforcement officer grant program by:

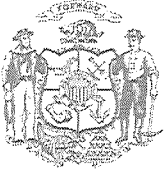
- Removing the requirement limiting the grants to cities with populations of more than 25,000, allowing town, village, county and all city law enforcement agencies to apply.
- Expanding the use of funding to allow applicants to identify their greatest needs such as drug or K9 units.
- Removes the cap on program funding, allowing for a discussion on DOJ potentially increasing the amount of funding for the program through their existing budget, and potential discretionary cuts in other areas of the state budget that may help increase overall funding for the program.
- Improves reporting requirements to DOJ.

The goal behind this bill is to add approximately \$10 million to the law enforcement officer grant program, which can be paid for through the use of ARPA funds. Using the funds to improve public safety is one of the specific identified uses for ARPA funds.

By prioritizing our spending, we can support our local law enforcement agencies and protect our citizens without breaking the bank or raising taxes.

This proposal is currently supported by:

- Wisconsin Professional Police Association
- Milwaukee Police Association
- Wisconsin Chiefs of Police



ANDRÉ JACQUE

STATE SENATOR • 1ST SENATE DISTRICT

Phone: (608) 266-3512

Fax: (608) 282-3541

Sen.Jacque@legis.wi.gov

State Capitol - P.O. Box 7882

Madison, WI 53707-7882

The amendment keeps the requirement that DOJ award the grant to the applicants with the highest rates of violent crime and keeps the current law that allows for grants to be awarded for three consecutive years. It also creates a definition of primary jurisdiction.

Thank you for your consideration of AB 777.



January 5, 2022

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

From: Pat Mitchell, President Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, West Allis Chief of Police

Steve Roux, First Vice President Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, Rice Lake Chief of Police

Re: Support Assembly Bill 777, Grants for Additional Policing and Strategic Planning to Combat Crime and Grants for Beat Patrol Officers

Chairman Spiros, thank you for your willingness to hold a hearing on this important bill. I also want to thank Representative Cabral-Guevara and Senator Andre Jacque for introducing this important bill and working with law enforcement to improve this legislation and support our efforts to keep our communities safe.

On behalf of our members from across Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association is proud to support Assembly Bill 777.

The additional funding this legislation utilizes for policing and strategic planning will help each of the recipient departments better protect their community members from the continued increase in crime.

With law enforcement agencies across Wisconsin struggling to recruit and retain new officers in recent years, these planning dollars will go a long way to aid each and every department. The Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association is appreciative of these efforts to find more funding for public safety and is open to additional conversations on ways to address increased crime rates, challenges of recruiting and retaining officers, and additional funding from training officers.

The Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association supports all additional grant funding measures that help our agencies employ the best and most qualified officers. As we look to continue to find ways to combat violent crime, this bill is another positive change that will assist this cause.