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## Testimony on Senate Bill 474 and Assembly Bill 330

*Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety*

*Thursday, October 28, 2021*

Chairman Wanggarrd and members,

I'd like to thank you for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 474/Assembly Bill 330, which would enhance training for Student Resource Officers in Wisconsin schools.

Earlier this session, the report of the Speaker's Task Force Subcommittee on Law Enforcement Policies and Standards was released summarizing the activities and topics of consensus identified through multiple meetings and discussions. As co-chair of the committee, I am incredibly proud of the bipartisan work we've done to have the hard conversations that will make a difference in the lives of people of color in Wisconsin. As we all know, these issues can be incredibly polarizing, yet we have succeeded in bringing the community and law enforcement voices to the table to find consensus and move forward together.

One area that the task force explored was that of school resource officers (SROs). SROs are generally members of a local law enforcement agency that work within schools. While duties of a SROs are typically outlined in a memorandum of understanding between a participating school district and sponsoring law enforcement agency, it became clear to the subcommittee that there are wide variances in the level of service SROs are currently offering, but more importantly, wide variances in the level of training they are receiving.

Oftentimes SROs are expected to serve as an informal counselor and even a de facto educator. For this reason, SB 474/AB 330 reflects the subcommittee's recommendations to provide additional training prior to serving in a school setting.

Back in 2018, the legislature and Governor Walker created the Office of School Safety within the Department of Justice to help provide local school districts with the tools and training they needed to keep our students safe. Since that time however, there has been a piecemealed effort to hire SROs with no state-set standards of service or training requirements.

Current law provides basic standards for law enforcement officers, but is silent when it comes SROs. To address this shortcoming, SB 474/SB 330 would require the DOJ's Office of School Safety to establish standards and approve a certified, statewide training program for all SROs moving forward. The bill further stipulates that all existing SROs would need to partake in this program to remain active as an SRO prior to September 1, 2022.

In keeping with the subcommittee's efforts to increase transparency, the bill would also require that the DOJ maintain a database of all SROs, including information on when each officer completed their



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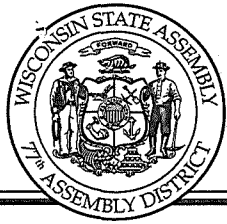
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training requirement prescribed by this bill. According to DOJ, the department is aware of 300 SROs currently serving in Wisconsin, however, this information is not closely tracked.

Senate Bill 474/Assembly Bill 330 is the direct result of the hard work and dedication put forth by the members of the Speaker's Task Force Subcommittee on Law Enforcement Policies and Standards. The safety of our students is too important to continue without enhanced training for those officers responsible for this work. When enacted, SB 474/AB 330 will provide additional peace of mind to parents and students alike that the SROs protecting their schools are best-prepared to meet the specific needs of their jobs.

Finally, I want to thank my task force co-chair, Representative Stubbs, for her work developing these recommendations and members of the task force for their valued input. While there is more work to be done, this and the other task force bills before you today are a great step forward in addressing racial disparities in Wisconsin.



WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**Shelia Stubbs**

77TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Thursday October 28<sup>th</sup> 2021**

**Assembly Bill 330/ Senate Bill 474; Relating to: school resource officers**

**Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety**

Good morning Chairman Waangard and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 474/Assembly Bill 330, which would standardize training for School Resource Officers (SRO's), and mandates that the Office of School Safety maintains a database of all SRO's. This legislation arose from a recommendation by the Speaker's Taskforce on Racial Disparities Subcommittee on Law Enforcement Policies and Standards.

SRO's are utilized in many communities across the state of Wisconsin. However, as of today, the training of SRO's is not standardized, and there is no database tracking who SRO's are, and what districts they are serving. This bill would mandate that SRO's must learn how their presence is felt in an academic environment, and how they can better serve the students, faculty, and staff of their assigned school.

SRO's can bridge the divide between our young people and law enforcement. Their special position can help foster a healthy and positive relationship with law enforcement that can stick with a student long after graduation. However officers that are not well trained for this position can create a bad impression on a young person, and lead to toxic encounters in their adulthood. If officers are going to be in our schools, they need to be a resource, not a liability.

In my district, Madison Metropolitan School District has removed SRO's from all public high schools. The same has been done in Milwaukee Public Schools. This bill does not take away the

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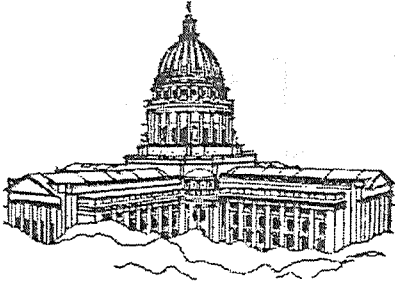
power of local school districts to decide if SRO's are right for their schools, their staff or their students. However, this bill will ensure that if a district does use SRO's, that they are equipped to serve our educational institutions.

SRO's are in a unique position that requires special training. If our students are going to have a police presence in their schools, those officers must be equipped to handle the dynamic and unique environment of an academic institution. This recommendation was agreed upon by community leaders, leaders in law enforcement, and leaders in the faith community because we all understand that SRO's need to be held to a higher standard than most other officers.

Thank you members of the committee for taking the time to read my testimony. I hope that you will consider increasing the training standards for our SRO's, and ensuring that our academic institutions are policed only by knowledgeable and effective officers.

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# LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

**Written Testimony of Sen. Lena Taylor**  
**Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety**  
**Public Hearing – SB 474/AB 330**  
**October 28, 2021**

Chair Wanggaard, Vice-Chair Wimberger and members of the committee, thank you for today's public hearing on SB 474/AB 330 regarding school resource officers.

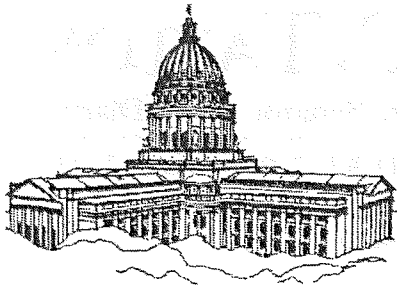
In the wake of highly publicized officer involved shootings, the ongoing debate regarding community policing and the relationship between officers and people of color, many communities are also taking a look at the role of school resource officers. Facing calls for a reevaluation of the presence of police officers in schools, local officials and school districts are making decisions on whether to remove officers from buildings, provide additional training, or more explicitly define responsibilities and standards for officers engaging with youth.

While there have been some extremely disturbing videos that have surfaced regarding use of force incidents involving students and resource officers, we know that these relationships have existed in some school districts successfully for years. In some instances, we have learned that the policies and laws about resource officers vary from state to state, school district to school district.

A brief search yielded the existence of the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). According to an interview with Chase Lyday, president of the Indiana School Resource Officers Association, he said this organization provides best practices that include, agreements that contain clear direction for where weapons are kept, how force is used, when arrests are made, required annual reviews.

In a recent article, St. Joseph County Sheriff William Redmond, of Indiana said "It takes a special person to interact with kids," who worked for 18 years as a DARE officer in schools across the county. "I'm not just going to put someone in schools who's aggressive, who's just going to arrest everybody. I want our officers to engage with kids and show them they're human as well."

The article also noted that officers also were expected to uphold laws within schools, had the authority to handcuff students, make arrests and interview witnesses to an incident without an adult being present.



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SB 474/ SB 330 provides Wisconsin law enforcement, school districts, students, and their families with additional resources or tools to ensure competent and appropriate interactions. The bill's requirement, of the Office of School Safety in the Department of Justice, to develop standards and approve a certified training program for school resource officers is a major step towards creating school environments that are safer for everyone.

Yes, we can debate the pros and cons of police officers in schools. While some worry about the increased frequency of school shootings, others worry about the criminalization of student behavior. I would be less than honest, if I didn't also acknowledge disparities regarding students of color and youth with disabilities. We have seen data that supports the "school-to-prison pipeline," a disturbing national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

What we can do, is ensure that we equip our school resource officers with clear standards and training to better assist them to do their jobs. We can let parents know, that while we use school resource officers in our schools, we also want them trained on how to best interact with their children.

SB 474/AB 330 gets us closer to that goal. I hope you will join us in supporting this proposal and thank you for your time.

# WISCONSIN PROFESSIONAL POLICE ASSOCIATION

Law Enforcement Employee Relations Division • Supervisory Officers Relations Division • Civilian Employees Relations Division

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** October 28, 2021

**TO:** SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY

**FROM:** Jim Palmer, Executive Director  
Wisconsin Professional Police Association *JUP*

**RE:** Support of 2021 Senate Bill 470 (pre-employment psychological testing)  
Support of 2021 Senate Bill 471 (annual crisis intervention training)  
Support of 2021 Senate Bill 472 (no-knock search warrant reporting)  
Support of 2021 Senate Bill 473 (grants for body-worn cameras)  
Support of 2021 Senate Bill 474 (school resource officer training & standards)  
Support of 2021 Senate Bill 475 (crisis program enhancement grants)  
Support of 2021 Senate Bill 476 (post-critical incident drug testing)  
Support of 2021 Assembly Bill 329 (no-knock search warrant reporting)  
Support of 2021 Assembly Bill 330 (school resource officer training & standards)  
Support of 2021 Assembly Bill 331 (pre-employment psychological testing)  
Support of 2021 Assembly Bill 332 (annual crisis intervention training)  
Support of 2021 Assembly Bill 333 (crisis program enhancement grants)  
Support of 2021 Assembly Bill 334 (post-critical incident drug testing)  
Support of 2021 Assembly Bill 335 (grants for body-worn cameras)

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Representing over 10,000 members from more than 300 local association affiliates, the Wisconsin Professional Police Association (WPPA) is the state's largest law enforcement group. Our mission is to protect and promote public safety, as well as the interests of the dedicated men and women that serve to provide it. In that vein, we offer this memorandum to express our ardent **SUPPORT** of the bills before the committee today.

Earlier this year, after several months of arduous but necessary public discussions on how to strengthen the relationship between the police and the communities they serve, the Speaker's Task Force on Racial Disparities issued an array of recommendations to establish new standards and training, enhance transparency and oversight, and facilitate more effective community engagement.

As a proud member of that body, I can tell you that the recommendations were the result of an authentic, consensus-building process that included lawmakers from both parties alongside activists and advocates for communities of color, faith-based organizations and law enforcement. The recommendations are a testament to what can be achieved when people work together for a common goal.

# WISCONSIN PROFESSIONAL POLICE ASSOCIATION

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Several recommendations issued by the Task Force have already been enacted into law, such as measures to explicitly prohibit officers from using chokeholds, to collect data on law enforcement's use of force, and to establish new financial support for community policing efforts.

Most notably, Wisconsin adopted a uniform standard for law enforcement's use of force. This new law also requires officers that witness excessive force to report it and intervene if possible, and it establishes "whistleblower protections" for these officers to safeguard them from adverse employment action, such as discipline.

The bills before the committee today were also recommended by the Task Force, and the Assembly swiftly passed them back in June. They now wait for the State Senate to push them across the finish line. The WPPA supports these measures without exception, because we believe that they will promote law enforcement transparency and accountability, enhance the training and qualifications officers need to meet the demands of their profession, and provide local governments with more resources to better serve the public.

While the passage of these lingering bills will not mark the end of the police reform dialogue, no one should be surprised when the calls for change grow louder and more radical if the Senate finds itself unable to act. In order to best serve the interests of the public and the dedicated men and women that work to keep our communities safe, the time to act is now. For those reasons, we respectfully urge the distinguished members of this committee to advance these bills as soon as possible, so that we may continue to move the ball forward in a way that is both thoughtful and meaningful.

Thank you.





To: Members, Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety  
From: Badger State Sheriffs' Association  
Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association  
Date: October 28, 2021  
RE: **Testimony in support of**  
**SB 470/AB 331, SB 471/AB 332, SB 472/AB 329, SB 473/AB 335, SB 474/AB**  
**330, SB 475/AB 333, SB 476/AB 334**

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Chairman Wanggaard, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Nate Dreckman, and I am the Grant County Sheriff as well as the President of the Badger State Sheriffs' Association. Joining me today is Dodge County Sheriff, Dale Schmidt, who also serves as the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President and Legislative Chair. Together with the Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association, our organizations represent all of Wisconsin's 72 Sheriffs and over 1,000 deputies and jail officers.

I had the opportunity to be appointed to the Task Force and on behalf of the county law enforcement community, we are grateful to Representatives Steineke and Stubbs for the opportunity to listen, contribute and find consensus on numerous critical policy items impacting law enforcement and the citizens we serve and protect. Our organizations are committed to finding and supporting policies that increase training, utilize best practices, and promote public safety transparency for all Wisconsin residents.

I want to highlight a few of the bills that the Speaker's Task Force has put forward with our support:

- SB 472/AB 329 (no-knock warrants): SB 427/AB 329 requires the Department of Justice to collect information about the use of no-knock warrants and unannounced entries by law enforcement in Wisconsin. This information, which will be reported annually, will help policymakers better understand how no-knock warrants are used in Wisconsin and if any changes need to be made to that process.
- SB 470/AB 331 – (psychological evaluation): Law enforcement is a difficult job that is not only physically taxing, but emotionally and psychologically challenging as well. SB 470/AB 331 will help ensure that law enforcement officers are of stable mental health when they are hired by requiring prospective officers to have a psychological evaluation. According to DOJ, nearly two-thirds of Wisconsin law enforcement agencies already require a psychological evaluation as a condition of employment. The Legislature has considered this policy in the past; a similar bill in 2009 had widespread legislative support but died at the end of session. This bill, as amended by the Assembly, follows best practice and streamlines paperwork.

- SB 473/AB 335 (body camera grants): While some law enforcement agencies in Wisconsin use body cameras, others are unable to afford them. Body cameras can help protect both citizens and law enforcement officers by documenting critical situations. SB 473/AB 335 will help more law enforcement agencies acquire body cameras by creating a grant program administered by DOJ. The bill requires agencies that receive a DOJ body camera grant to use and maintain the camera technology, ensuring that the grants are not wasted.

I also want to highlight two more bills from that package that deal with crisis management, an important and highly sensitive aspect of our jobs. Law enforcement officers are almost always the first to respond to urgent events where an individual is reported to be a danger to themselves or others. Our officers work hard to deal with these situations appropriately, but sometimes they result in tragic outcomes. Two bills from the package will help improve the outcome of crisis situations:

- SB 471/AB 332 (crisis training): Wisconsin law enforcement officers are required to complete 24 hours of recertification training every year. SB 471/AB 332 will make crisis management training a required part of that training. This will help law enforcement respond more effectively to crisis situations and will help officers stay up to date on best practices for dealing with individuals in crisis.
- SB 475/AB 333 (crisis program grants): SB 475/AB 333 expands an already-existing grant program that assists local governments in developing certified mental health crisis teams consisting of both trained law enforcement officers and crisis professionals. These teams will be able to respond more effectively to crisis situations involving mental health than law enforcement can do on its own.

Wisconsin's county law enforcement also supports SB 474/AB 330, which will provide specific standards and training for law enforcement officers working in schools, and SB 476/AB 334, which will ensure that officers involved in critical incidents are not compromised using alcohol or illegal drugs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.