



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

TESTIMONY OF SENATE BILL 266 AND ASSEMBLY BILL 300

Thank you Mr. Chairman and committee members for today's hearing on Senate Bill 266 and Assembly Bill 300. This bipartisan bill provides continuing health insurance protection for the immediate family of a police officer that has been killed in the line of duty.

I introduced the first version of this bill on February 11, 2011 – just five weeks into my first term. Since that day, sixteen police officers have tragically lost their lives while protecting our lives.

- Craig Birkholz
- Sergio Aleman
- Jennifer Sebens
- Donald Bishop
- Michael Severson
- Trevor Casper
- Ryan Copeland
- Michael Ventura
- Dan Glaze
- Jason Weiland
- Anthony Borostowski
- Charles Irvine
- Michael Michalski
- Matthew Rittner
- Kou Her
- John Hetland

Had these 16 officers been fire fighters, this bill would not be necessary. Since 2009, state law has required that local governments cover the continuing health insurance premiums for the families of fire fighters that die in the line of duty. Not all of those sixteen fallen heroes had families, but for those that did, those families deserve the same treatment as fire fighter families.

As a former Racine Police Officer, I know firsthand the dangers that many officers face. When an officer enters a situation, they have many thoughts going through their mind. Evaluating the tactical situation, considering public safety, and negotiation strategies are all of critical importance. The last thing an officer needs to be worrying about is whether or not their family will be protected by health insurance coverage if something bad should happen to them.

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The bill requires the entities that employ police officers, or EMTs to provide continuing health insurance coverage for the families of those killed in the line of duty, just like fire fighters have currently. Health insurance coverage would continue until a spouse reaches age 65 or remarries, and to surviving children until they reach age 26.

As you know, health insurance coverage can be expensive, and is a prime cost driver of local government budgets. To prevent the continuing coverage from burdening just one local community, the bill is funded through a first draw on state money. For most part, this will mean a first draw on Shared Revenue or UW funding. Of course, other government entities employ law enforcement, like DNR and DOJ, and funding for those officers would come from DNR and DOJ appropriations. For Marquette University, there is no state money going to the University, and therefore, it is just a requirement for Marquette. Marquette specifically request that we not take the funding for health insurance from their state money that goes to the Dental School.

There are some changes to the bill which I believe will help us pass it this session. Essentially, the bill has gone back to the basics. First, the bill does not cover those that died prior to 2019. This has the impact of dramatically reducing the fiscal impact of the bill. The bill also does not include the temporary loan program that was in earlier versions.

Senate Bill 266 and Assembly Bill 300 give the legislature and the people of Wisconsin the opportunity to show our support for our first responders. For those that give the ultimate sacrifice, the least we can do is help to ensure their surviving family members are taken care of. If we truly “Back the Badge,” we should also “Back the Badge’s Families.”



**Testimony on Assembly Bill 300
Joint Hearing of the Assembly Committee on Insurance,
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
September 17, 2019**

Chairman Wanggaard and Chairman Peterson, and members of the Senate and Assembly committees, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my testimony with you today regarding Assembly Bill 300, which would create a much needed benefit for law enforcement officers in our state.

In 2009, the Wisconsin legislature passed a bill requiring municipalities to provide health insurance coverage to the surviving spouses and children of fire fighters who died in the line of duty. Unfortunately, in a grave oversight, law enforcement and other first responders were left out of this legislation.

This bill seeks to correct that oversight by ensuring state and local law enforcement and EMS are eligible for the same benefit.

Under this bill, an employer would be required to continue to pay the health insurance premiums for the spouses and children of law enforcement officers and EMS who are killed in the line of duty. Local governments would then be able to file a request for reimbursement from the Department of Revenue. These reimbursement payments would be funded from county and municipal aid shared revenue.

The health insurance premiums required under this bill will only be paid until the spouse remarries or reaches the age of 65, and for the children, only until they reach the age of 26 or until the child has insurance that is offered under his or her employer. This bill would be retroactive, going back to January 1, 2019.

Every single day, law enforcement officers put their lives on the line to protect and serve the people of Wisconsin. Many of these individuals have spouses and children at home who simply don't know whether their loved ones will be coming home at the end of their shift. In addition to the risk law enforcement officers put themselves at, they have to worry what will happen to their families should they be killed in the line of duty and whether their families will be financially okay. With the countless dangers law enforcement officers face each and every day, this is one we can do something about. We can give them the assurance that if something happens to them, their families will be cared for and will still have access to health insurance.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share testimony in support of this bill, and I welcome any questions.

Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, Inc.

River Ridge – 1141 South Main Street, Shawano, Wisconsin 54166 • Telephone (715) 524-8283

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President
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Kenneth M. Pileggi
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2nd Vice President
West Allis

Steven G. Roux
3rd Vice President
Rice Lake

Donald L. Thaves
Executive Director
Shawano

Timothy J. Styka
Treasurer
Menasha



TESTIMONY OF SEAN MARSCHKE, PRESIDENT WISCONSIN CHIEFS OF POLICE ASSOCIATION

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard, Chairman Petersen and committee members of Assembly Committee on Insurance and the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

My name is Sean Marschke, and I am the Police Chief in the Village of Sturtevant and the President of the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association.

A broad-based Coalition of men and women representing thousands of individuals who daily put their lives on the line to protect and serve others across this state are respectfully asking this committee and the entire Legislature to support Assembly Bill 300 and its companion bill, Senate Bill 266.

We want to thank State Senator Van Wanggaard, State Representative John Spiros, State Senator Janet Bewley, State Representative Steve Doyle, Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, Senate Minority Leader Jennifer Shilling, Assembly Minority Leader Gordon Hintz as well as the 95 sponsors of this legislation for their support.

The Wisconsin Chiefs of Police and the 95 sponsors of the legislation are joined by a coalition of protective service groups that include; Wisconsin Professional Police Association, the Badger State Sheriffs' Association, Wisconsin County Law Enforcement Professionals of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association, and Professional Firefighters of Wisconsin in support of this bill.

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Assembly Bill 300 and Senate Bill 266 will extend health insurance benefits to the families of those killed in the line of duty to ALL full-time law enforcement and other protective service personnel. The benefit would be offered until the widow or widower remarries, reaches Medicare age, or has an employer who also provides health insurance to the family, making the benefit unneeded; or when the children age out.

The legislation will provide a measure of security and peace of mind in the wake of tragedy. The minuscule costs of providing health insurance to the surviving family members will show these Wisconsin families that the citizens of this state ***do care*** about them. This law will provide the much-needed peace of mind for families whose loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice serving and protecting their communities.

Today, I have the somber privilege to be joined by three individuals who have had to live through this tragedy. These strong women have had to move forward after their spouses gave the ultimate sacrifice for their communities and the State of Wisconsin.

Thank you and now I would like to first introduce Ashley Birkholz.

Now, I would like to introduce Kara Weiland.

Lastly, I would like to introduce Charlette Nennig.

**TESTIMONY OF ASHLEY BIRKHOLZ IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 300 AND
COMPANION BILL SENATE BILL 266**

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard, Chairman Petersen and committee members of Assembly Committee on Insurance and the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

Good afternoon.

My name is Ashley Birkholz. My husband, Fond du Lac Police Officer Craig Birkholz, was killed in the line of duty on March 20, 2011. Craig was also a US Army Veteran and served two tours of duty, both in Afghanistan and Iraq. On March 20th, Craig was responding to the call of Officer down. His co-worker, Officer Ryan Williams had been shot twice and the situation was unstable. Craig rushed to the scene to try to help his fellow officer. Unfortunately, Craig was shot from a second story window and was killed shortly after he arrived on scene. That day forever changed the lives of many in the Fond du Lac Community.

At the time of Craig's murder, I was 25 years old. Craig was just 28. I was a full-time graduate student and working part time at a job that did not offer health insurance. When Craig was killed, among all the other stressors of losing your spouse unexpectedly, I was told that my health insurance was going to be terminated on March 31, 2011.

During this time, I was still a full-time graduate student, pursuing a master's degree in Social Work. I had no idea what I was going to do as I did not have the option of getting health insurance through my employer. What would you do if your spouse carried your health insurance and was killed on the job? Would you be covered? Would your children be covered? How would you pay for it? Thankfully, the Fond du Lac Area Foundation heard of my struggle and jumped in to help. The Foundation offered to pay the COBRA premium so I could keep my health insurance for the next year.

When you lose your spouse, you lose more than just the physical being that was your husband or wife. There are secondary losses associated with such a traumatic event. You lose your sense of security; there is a significant loss of belonging. Who am I now? Often, many friends and family don't know how to

respond, what to say or do, so they disappear. There is loss of social support, loss of faith, loss of confidence, a loss of memory. There is a feeling that all the hopes and dreams that you and that person shared, no longer exist. I lost my best friend that day. For many, there is a loss of additional help with children in the home. Also, and most importantly for today, there is a loss of financial stability, loss of income, and loss of health insurance.

Thankfully, The City of Fond du Lac felt this matter was important and passed a proclamation to cover the health insurance premiums for the families of any city worker killed on duty in the City of Fond du Lac, and I was grandfathered in. This was a huge relief to me as it was assured that I would be covered until I had a change in circumstances.

Since March 20, 2011, I have accomplished many things. I did complete my graduate program for my Masters in Social Work in August of 2012, on track with my classmates. I was able to secure a full-time job very shortly after graduation. In October of 2018, I completed all of the requirements and obtained the highest license for my field and I am now a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. I also hold a license through the State of WI as a Clinical Substance Abuse Counselor.

Though I have had many professional accomplishments, I have also spent a lot of time in the last 8 years grieving the loss of my husband. He was the person I expected to spend the rest of my life with, and that was taken from me far too soon. I have tried to live my life to the fullest since that time, knowing that we are not promised tomorrow. I help others deal with tragedy and find ways to deal with the difficult circumstances life throws at us.

Having secure health insurance has been very freeing for me the last seven years since the City of Fond du Lac decided to step in and pass their proclamation. I have been able to work at several different places that did not always provide health insurance. Currently, my job as a psychotherapist is a Fee for Service job, which means that I am not offered health insurance through my employer. Let's revisit that. I have a master's degree, seven years post graduate schooling, and am not offered health insurance. Passage of this bill would offer some additional freedom to those families who have lost a loved one in the line of duty.

Remember, they have not only lost their spouse, but all the secondary losses they have already endured. Should losing their health insurance be another concern

they have to deal with, likely very shortly after the death of their loved one? I don't believe that it should be.

Please take the time to put yourself in my shoes. In the shoes of the other law enforcement families that have lost their loved ones in the line of duty in the State of Wisconsin.

There have been FIVE! FIVE line of duty deaths in Wisconsin within the last year. While this is uncommon, and uncharacteristic for our state, it has happened.

Many of you on these two committees are sponsors of the legislation and I thank you. I also thank the leadership in both houses for their support. I also want to thank our champions Senator Van Wanggaard and Bewley and Representatives Spiros and Doyle.

Please consider joining the 95 legislators that have sponsored Assembly Bill 300 and Senate Bill 266 and vote the bills out of committee, pass them in both houses and send the legislation to the Governor to be signed into law. You can make a difference to those families that have suffered the ultimate sacrifice by passing the legislation and allowing them the comfort of knowing they have one less burden to bear.

As my husband, Officer Craig Birkholz, would always sign his work emails: Stay strong. Stay safe. Stay positive.

Thank you for your time.

**TESTIMONY OF KARA WEILAND IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 300 AND
COMPANION BILL – SENATE BILL 266**

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard, Chairman Petersen and committee members of Assembly Committee on Insurance and the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

My name is Kara Weiland.

On March 22, 2017 my husband, my daughter's father, my partner for life, Jason Weiland was taken from our family.

My husband Jason was a detailed person; it showed in the many cases he investigated to all the information he provided in his line of duty death packet. We had many discussions at night on the "what ifs" and what he wanted if he died.

On March 22nd, 2017, it was no longer a "what if" and the pages of his packet held no surprises. Every page of the packet was filled out and helped my spinning mind navigate the next few days to the next few months of getting his estate in order. But it could not prepare me for the roller coaster ride that lied ahead of us.

March 22nd started off as a typical day but shortly after lunch my life was no longer typical. I turned on the 911 radio to listen to what was unfolding in our community and within a minute or two I heard Captain Schulz radio that an officer was down, no badge number or name was given. But I knew that it was Jason, the few minutes felt like hours as I waited to get some confirmation about my feeling.

I was finally taken to the mobile command center where Wausau Police Chief Ben Bliven gave me a ride to the hospital where I was met by Marathon County Sheriff Scott Parks. Sheriff Parks escorted me inside to meet with the doctors where I was told that there was nothing they could do. The doctors tried to reassure me that Jason died instantly and did not feel a thing. Our daughters, Ella, age 12, and Anna, age 10, were still in school which were on lockdown due to the active shooter situation.

Sheriff Parks went to get them and bring them to me at the hospital. Sitting in that small waiting room I had to tell my girls that their dad was dead. I can still

hear my youngest daughter saying, "No Mom no, it's not true, tell me it's not true." I could go on for hours telling you all the little details of that day that are stuck in my head. But to give you details about the last two and a half years is a very different story. It is all still a blur and my memory is very foggy.

Being a cop family, the girls and I were used to Jason missing holidays, special occasions and events at school because he had to work but he always made it up to them. But now he isn't going to be late or find a way to celebrate a different day because he is never coming home.

Now faced with this new reality I had to figure out how to move my family forward. I ended up taking about 3 months off of work and tried going back to working 40 hours a week, so that I could keep my insurance.

I was losing my mind, trying to process my own grief, trying to take care of two young girls, help them process their grief all the while trying to keep our lives as normal as possible. By the end of 2017 I knew that I couldn't work 40 hours a week, it wasn't healthy for me and I was being pulled in too many directions. This was especially not good for the girls, they only had one parent and they needed me to be there for them. But I was terrified of cutting my hours because I didn't want to lose my insurance.

By the beginning of 2018, I had decided to cut my hours and pay a higher premium. I had so much on my plate I was just going through the motions and I was there physically for my kids but mentally I was done. Today I am currently working but not enough hours to have insurance through my employer. Finding insurance and going through all the paperwork that is required to maintain insurance is not easy. Luckily my kids are healthy, but I want to have decent insurance in case something happens and not have the added stress of figuring out how I will afford it.

I don't want to see another spouse or family have to go through what I have gone through especially when we as a state can make the tragic loss a little less stressful by being there, providing insurance to the family and helping them move forward.

Every first responder in this state should know that their family will be taken care of if something would happen to them. We owe this to them since they go to work every day to ensure that the people they serve will be taken care of.

I'm still trying to figure out "our new normal" but I know as long as I raise my girls to be healthy, responsible and independent individuals that I am on the right path.

I am moved by the amount of support for Assembly Bill 300 and Senate Bill 266. The leadership from both political parties, the 95 sponsors of the bill, including many of you on these two committees, the authors of the bill and the law enforcement groups have demonstrated that Wisconsin not only "Backs the Badge" – but Wisconsin also supports the families of those who give the ultimate sacrifice.

Thank you.

TESTIMONY OF CHARLETTE NENNIG IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 300 AND COMPANION BILL - SENATE BILL 266

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard, Chairman Petersen and committee members of Assembly Committee on Insurance and the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

My name is Charlette Nennig, I am the widow of Lieutenant LeRoy Nennig Jr of the Sheboygan County Sheriff Department.

On August 15th 2004 after working an assignment for the 2004 PGA tournament at Whistling Straights in Sheboygan County, he came upon a vehicle fire, as he slowed down and was speaking to the people at the scene he was struck behind by another vehicle and was killed.

My life, the life of my son – and our entire family is forever changed. Our family has not been the same since. My mother-in-law and father-in-law still grieve for their oldest son. My son Craig, who was 17 years old at the time, never got the chance to have his father watch him play football during his senior year. My son, who had 1,200 yards rushing, never had the opportunity to have his dad in the stands.

After high school, my son followed in my husband's footsteps – and is in law enforcement in Wisconsin. Law enforcement in our family is a rich tradition. My husband's father is a retired police officer. My husband was in law enforcement and I am a VERY proud mother of my son, a law enforcement officer as well.

Each generation – has gone into law enforcement because they truly were called. The sense of giving back to community, providing safety for others and frankly, making Wisconsin better – has been passed down three generations.

As for me, I lost my husband, the father of our son. I lost my life partner.

All of our future plans were also gone. LeRoy was due to retire after the PGA tournament.

In the weeks following the accident, I was overwhelmed with the many tasks as a result of his death, including waiting for the results of the accident, writing 500

thank you notes, being advised when I would receive his last paycheck and that I only had a few months of health insurance at the same time helping my son deal with the loss of his father.

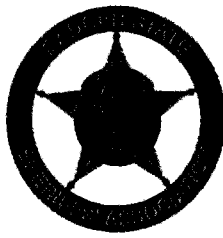
Passing Assembly Bill 300 and companion Bill, Senate Bill 266 will allow future survivors to have the needed time to take care of their families after such a loss during their darkest hours.

Leroy loved working for his community and believed in the work he did for Sheboygan County. I am not here today for myself as I will not be benefitting from this bill, I am here today because I strongly believe in this legislation and that passing the bill is the right thing to do for future families that give the ultimate sacrifice.

I would like to thank you for allowing me to tell my story today. I would like to thank you the authors of the legislation and the 95 sponsors of these bills. I would like to thank the leadership in both houses for their support. I would also like to thank the law enforcement community.

In closing, I would ask you to please pass Assembly Bill 300 and Senate Bill 266 so future widows or widowers, and their families can focus on healing and not on insurance.

Thank you.



To: Members, Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Assembly Committee on Insurance
From: Badger State Sheriffs' Association
Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association
Date: September 17, 2019
Re: Support for SB 266 and AB 300

Good afternoon, I am Sheriff Mark Podoll of Green Lake County and President of Badger State Sheriffs Association, here today on behalf of all of Wisconsin's 72 Sheriffs to testify in support of Senate Bill 266 and Assembly Bill 300. With me is Captain Jeff Klatt of St. Croix County and legislative committee chair of the Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association (WS&DSA), which represents over 1,000 members, including Sheriffs, Deputies, and jail officers.

Everyday law enforcement officers across the state say good-bye to their spouses and children and head to work. Like myself, my fellow brothers and sisters in uniform understand that the job can be dangerous and unpredictable. However, we are committed to serve and protect the public's safety.

Although infrequent and tragic, some law enforcement officers make the ultimate sacrifice in their efforts to keep Wisconsin residents safe. In the wake of a tragedy like this, a family can be left to grieve and to fend for themselves with respect to their health insurance needs that are no longer provided to them.

This legislation ensures that the spouses and children of a fallen officer can continue to receive health insurance coverage. Extending these benefits, that are already provided to firefighters, to the rest of law enforcement will provide security to these families.

We acknowledge that the minimal fiscal impact of this proposal is a shared statewide cost. We believe this is the most equitable way to provide this infrequent benefit and give our families some peace of mind.

Finally, I want to thank the authors, Rep. Spiros and Sen. Wanggaard, for their continued commitment to this legislation.

On behalf of the members of BSSA and WS&DSA, we respectfully request the committee support this legislation. Thank you.

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Assembly Committee on Insurance Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

2019 Assembly Bill 300/Senate Bill 266

*Payment of health insurance premiums for survivors of law enforcement officers who die
in the line of duty
September 17, 2019*

Good morning Chairman Petersen and Chairman Wanggaard and members of the Committees. My name is Lt. Matt O'Brien and I am the Law Enforcement Policy Officer with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the amended version of Assembly Bill 300 (AB 300) and Senate Bill 266 (SB 266) in front of this joint committee.

I would like to start by acknowledging that WDNR Law Enforcement Chief Todd Schaller, who unfortunately could not be here today, prepared a letter that was delivered to Senator Wanggaard, Senator Bewley, Representative Spiros, and Representative Doyle on July 26th. In that letter Chief Schaller requested that all sworn law enforcement officers in the state of Wisconsin, regardless of agency or jurisdiction, be incorporated into this proposal. On behalf of all WDNR Law Enforcement I would like to thank all of the bill's authors for receiving that request and introducing the respective substitute amendments that make that change.

Wisconsin conservation wardens are state law enforcement officers who enforce criminal and civil laws that ensure public safety and natural resource protection. We are first responders to a variety of emergencies and natural disasters, and provide general law enforcement assistance in the communities we serve. Since our establishment in 1879, seven conservation wardens have died in the line-of-duty while serving the citizens of Wisconsin.

Conservation wardens, not unlike other law enforcement officers across the state and nation, go to work every day with a profound dedication to serving and protecting the public. We secure body armor to our chests and firearms to our duty belts with the knowledge that the day's work may force us to sacrifice our lives in service to our communities. This circumstance is necessarily accepted by the families we kiss goodbye every day, who hope, wish, or pray that we return safely at the day's end. And although the risks ever present in today's society will never remove this burden from our loved ones, there still remain opportunities for support where employer initiatives can at least ensure that those left behind face a less burdensome future after the loss of their loved one.

AB 300 and SB 266, as amended by assembly substitute amendment 1 and senate substitute amendment 1, offer one of those opportunities. By guaranteeing that a surviving spouse and dependents can continue to rely on the same health care premium coverage as prior to the line-of-duty death, these

families can find at least small comfort in knowing that the sacrifice of their loved one will not cause unforeseen collateral consequences to their health care.

The daily risks associated with serving the public as a sworn law enforcement are the same regardless of uniform, agency, or jurisdiction; to that end, the broad inclusion of the list of law enforcement officers included in the substitute amendment ensures equitable treatment that uniformly recognizes the invaluable service of all Wisconsin law enforcement officers—while also maintaining an equitable playing field for recruitment and retention of public servants.

On behalf of the DNR Bureau of Law Enforcement, I would like to thank you again for your time today and once again thank the bill authors for their work on this proposal and the substitute amendments. I appreciate your partnership and commitment to supporting Wisconsin's public safety community, and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



Wisconsin Troopers' Association

Executive Director – Ryan Zukowski

Glen Jones – President

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TO: Chairman Wanggaard, Petersen and Members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee and Assembly Committee on Insurance

FR: Glen Jones, President - Wisconsin Troopers' Association

DA: September 17, 2019

RE: Support of SB 266/AB 300, Survivor Benefits for a Law Enforcement Officer who Dies in the Line of Duty

Thank you, members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety and Assembly Committee on Insurance, for holding a public hearing and for the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 266/Assembly Bill 300, the survivor benefits for a law enforcement officer who dies in the line of duty.

The Wisconsin Troopers' Association (WTA) is comprised of more than 500 troopers, inspectors and police communication operators (PCOs) that have a shared commitment and vision to make Wisconsin safer for its citizens and tourists.

My name is Glen Jones, I am the President of the WTA. I have been an officer with the State Patrol for more than 33 years. I also serve on the Executive Board of the National Law Enforcement Memorial.

The wall outside this Capitol Building includes the names of 269 fallen officers. Some of them are my friends and co-workers. Next May, we will add Matthew Rittner and John Hetland to that wall, joining a list of brave heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom.

We all took an oath to uphold the Constitution, and we put our lives at risk each and every time that we go to work. In Wisconsin, an average of two law enforcement officers per year die in the line of duty. Under current law, the spouses and children of those officers quickly lose their health insurance. This bill would ensure the future surviving spouses and children of law enforcement officers will continue to have health insurance coverage, just as fire fighters do.

Our officers willingly take risks every day to protect the citizens of the State of Wisconsin. Their families also understand those risks. All law enforcement officers know the importance

of having a second officer *covering your six* in a high-risk situation. This bill is an opportunity for the employers to *cover the six* of the surviving families.

The members of the WTA would also like to recognize and thank Senator Wanggaard and Representative Spiros for their work on this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact Annie Early at 414-405-1050 with any questions or concerns.

WISCONSIN PROFESSIONAL POLICE ASSOCIATION

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



Written Testimony of:

Jim Palmer, Executive Director
WISCONSIN PROFESSIONAL POLICE ASSOCIATION

Before the:

**Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, and
Assembly Committee on Insurance**
WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE

September 17, 2019

With over 10,000 members, 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 who serve to provide it. The WPPA genuinely appreciates this opportunity to offer our ardent **SUPPORT to 2019 Senate Bill 266**, to provide for the payment of the health insurance premiums for the spouses and dependents of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.

Though infrequent, some officers make the ultimate sacrifice in their efforts to keep Wisconsin safe. In the wake of a tragedy like this, a family can be left to grieve and to fend for themselves with respect to their health insurance needs that are no longer provided to them. Senate Bill 266 would cover these rare and tragic circumstances, and it recognizes that, ***while an officer wears a badge; their service to Wisconsin is not a solitary endeavor***. Indeed, the law enforcement profession is one that requires the extraordinary support of loved ones who share a dedication and commitment to our common security.

We as a society should do everything that we can to care for those that have lost the support of a loved one who died while working to keep our neighborhoods, communities, and roadways safe. Senate Bill 266 would give officers some measure of peace in knowing that their survivors will have health insurance, and it would recognize that the safety of our communities not only requires dedicated men and women in uniform, but also the families who watch them depart each day to fulfill their solemn duty.

For these fundamental reasons, the WPPA respectfully requests that these committees approve this measure as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.