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Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Senate Bill 771
Thursday, February 6, 2020

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard and committee members for taking the time to hear Senate Bill 771. SB 771 will give necessary resources to stop the epidemic of auto thefts and escalating crimes that have plagued communities across the state in recent years.

Automobile thefts leading to reckless driving and police pursuits are threatening our communities. At the end of January, the Wisconsin State Journal reported for the 3rd time in a week, Monona police arrested teens for alleged car theft after chase. In December, the Racine Police Department reported an increase in car thefts over the fall and winter of 2019. In La Crosse, a man reported his truck stolen for the second time in less than a month. The City of Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission's data has shown an alarming trend: the median age of a driver pursued by Milwaukee Police decreased from 40 years old in 2003 to 18 in 2016. These articles outline a startling trend that has left communities across our state feeling unsafe.

Senate Bill 771 creates two grant programs to help our communities protect their citizens. Funded at \$5,000,000 each, the grants will give cities, villages, towns, and counties resources to combat these crimes. The first grant can provide aid for costs associated with additional policing to address automobile theft and carjacking. The second grant will help communities cover the costs associated with strategic planning to combat crime.

Under SB 771, the Department of Administration (DOA) is responsible for implementing the programs. DOA must first submit a plan for the grant program to the Joint Committee on Finance. The plan must ensure the grants will be distributed throughout all geographic areas of Wisconsin, both urban and rural communities. In awarding the grants, DOA must prioritize communities that have a higher incidence of automobile theft or carjacking. Finally, communities who receive grant money must report back to DOA within two years of receiving funds to detail how the money was used and the results.

Thank you for considering this important bill. I would also like to thank Representative Ott for his work on this issue. I hope to count on your support for this legislation.