



# Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

## TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 119

Thank you Vice-Chair and committee members for attending this hearing on Senate Bill 119, the “Fund the Police” bill. This is a simple bill requiring municipalities to maintain their police budgets consistently. If a municipality reduces its police budget, they would lose a corresponding amount in Shared Revenue.

This bill comes about because of the vocal calls to “Defund the Police” we are seeing in parts of Wisconsin and country. This effort is dangerous and unsafe. At a time when crime and calls for emergency services are increasing, reckless driving, car thefts, and domestic violence are exploding and fewer crimes are being “cleared”, defunding the police, no matter how you define “defund” is the definition of misplaced priorities. That’s why I authored this bill.

I realize that police services are usually the largest part of municipal budgets – for good reason. There is no more essential service that a municipality provides than policing. Period.

Shared Revenue is designed to help municipalities fund essential services in their budgets. If a community decides that it needs less of the most essential service, it only make sense that they also need less Shared Revenue. That’s what this bill does. There are other communities that would gladly accept those funds to keep their citizens safer.

Fire and emergency medical services are also essential functions of government. So, I have drafted an amendment that will be adding a Fire and EMS to the maintenance of effort requirement. The amendment also addresses the natural ebb and flow of police budgets. In some communities, a senior officer retiring often means a higher-salaried employee is replaced by a lower-salaried employee but the municipality has maintained its number of officers. With my amendment, the municipality would not see less Shared Revenue because of that retirement. The bill already allows for reductions resulting from merged or contracted services.

However, if a community attempts to slash costs by decreasing public safety, there will be and should be a financial consequence. The bill doesn’t prevent any community from defunding the police. As dangerous and foolish as that is, they can do that if they want. The bill just says that if your community defunds the police, your community will lose the same amount in Shared Revenue.

If you need less of your essential services, you need less aid. It’s common sense, and it deserves your support.

Thank you.

**Serving Racine and Kenosha Counties - Senate District 21**

## *Senate Bill 119*

March 11, 2021

Testimony from Rep. Spiros

Hello, and thank you Vice Chairman Wimberger and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety for allowing me to have the opportunity to testify regarding Senate Bill 119, relating to Funding the Police.

As my coauthor mentioned, this bill decreases shared revenue funding for municipalities if they decrease funding to their police force. This funding is then redistributed to municipalities who have not cut their forces.

The bill comes after many calls last year to “defund the police” all while violent crimes have increased across the country. Notably, Madison and Milwaukee both looked to defund or cut personnel in their police forces. Milwaukee cut 120 positions in their budget, while seeing an increase in arson, motor vehicle theft, aggravated assault, and a 95% increase in the homicide rate from 2019 to 2020. Even 2019 data from the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program shows that Milwaukee was the tenth worst city in the country with a violent crime rate of 1,332 incidents per 100,000 residents.

Our officers already are asked to do so much and now is not the time to be increasing their workload. Municipalities are making decisions based on emotions and not looking at the statistics within their own cities. As a former alderman I’m taken back by decisions they are making. You don’t make emotional decisions, you make factual decisions. If you reduce public safety funding, things are going to continue to get worse.

A concern of many communities wanting to defund the police is that the police force doesn’t represent all demographics. Changing the makeup of a police force requires training and training requires funding. We want municipalities to invest in their police force: their existing force, potential new officers, and other ways to improve.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share testimony in support of this bill.



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To: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety  
From: Curt Witynski, J.D., Deputy Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities  
Date: March 11, 2021  
Re: SB 119, Decreasing Shared Revenue if funding for law enforcement officers is Decreased

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities opposes SB 119, requiring that shared revenue payments be reduced for any municipality that decreases funding dedicated to hiring, training, and retaining police officers. We object to SB 119 for the following reasons:

- As DOR's fiscal impact estimate indicates, for most communities in Wisconsin decisions on whether to reduce police spending are driven by financial challenges posed by levy limits and shared revenue reductions rather than debates over the merits of "defunding the police."
- This bill blocks communities from shifting police funding to provide drug and alcohol treatment, mental health services or other innovative and creative approaches to addressing chronic public health challenges.
- Maintenance of effort mandates like this directly interfere with the ability of local elected officials to decide how best to balance municipal budgets and choose funding levels for competing critical service needs.
- The bill makes the highest cost service a municipality provides off limits for budget reductions when revenues are short. Police services consume on average 20% of municipal operating and capital expenditures by Wisconsin municipalities.
- Given law enforcement's large share of overall local government spending in Wisconsin, many municipalities have little choice but to consider cuts or freezes to police spending whenever financial challenges intensify due to unanticipated events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

We urge the committee to vote against recommending passage of SB 119. Thank you for considering our comments.



**City of Madison**

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**To: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety**  
**From: Mary Bottari**  
**Date: March 10, 2021**  
**Re: SB 119 Decreasing Shared Revenue if Funding for Law Enforcement is Decreased**

The City of Madison is writing in opposition to Wisconsin SB 119.

Under the bill, “if in any year a municipality decreases the amount of its municipal budget dedicated to hiring, training, and retaining law enforcement officers so that it is less than the amount dedicated to that purpose in the previous year, the municipality will receive a county and municipal aid payment that is reduced by the amount of that decrease.”

In 2020, Madison faced a \$16 million shortfall in revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Monona Terrace faced hundreds of cancellations. With workers telecommuting for safety, city parking revenues plummeted and our Metro bus service took a huge hit. The city’s tourism and entertainment industry suffered badly. IRONMAN and other large revenue-generating events cancelled, harming our room tax revenue.

Madison, like every city in the state, is required by state statute to balance the budget. In the absence of increased state aid to help us balance our books, Madison, and likely every other city in the state, was forced to make cuts across departments, including the police department.

Some thought Madison’s cuts to the police budget were too much, some thought they were too little. But they were prudent and necessary in one of the worst economies since the Great Depression.

Unfortunately, 2021 may not be much better for cities in our state. We are likely to face similar revenue shortfalls and similar deficit numbers. Given law enforcement’s share of overall local government spending, further spending cuts may be needed.

SB 119 would compound the crisis for cities by taking away much needed revenue. The most important thing that can be done to support cities in financial crisis is to increase their revenue options, not decrease them.

Even with anticipated American Rescue Act funding, cities will need maximum flexibility to adjust our budgets to respond to the tremendous economic dislocations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, to past, present and future budgets.

We urge the committee to vote no on this measure. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



Department of Administration  
Intergovernmental Relations Division

**Tom Barrett**  
Mayor

**Sharon Robinson**  
Director of Administration

**Kimberly Montgomery**  
Director of Intergovernmental Relations

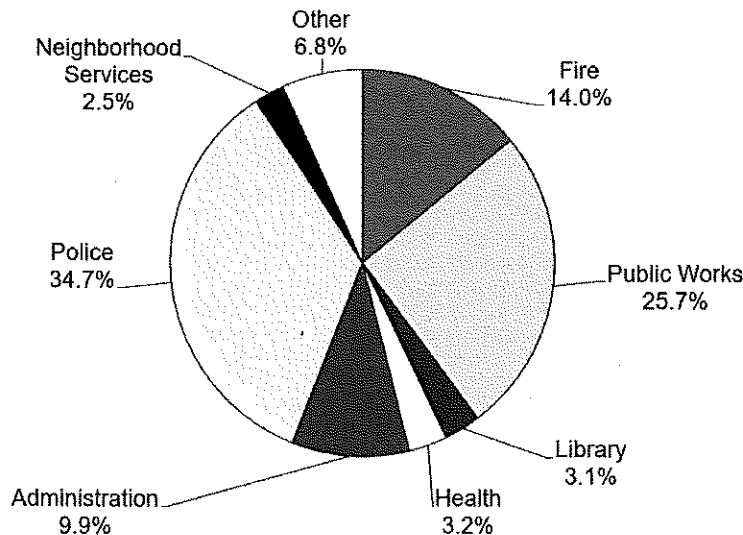
City of Milwaukee Testimony on SB-119, Relating to: decreasing shared revenue payments to municipalities based on decreased funding for law enforcement officers.  
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

*March 11, 2021*

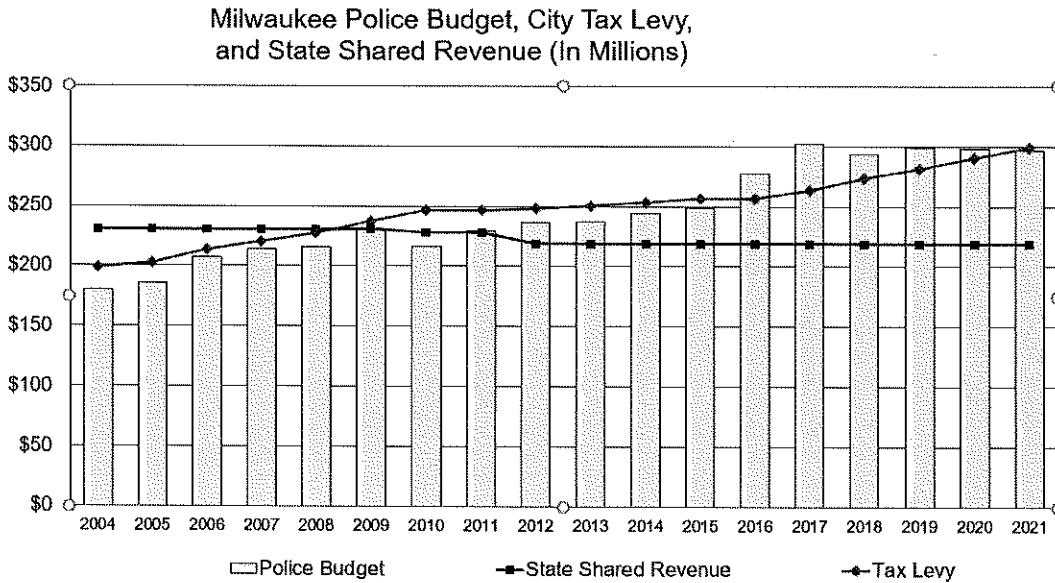
Thank you, Chairman Wanggaard and fellow members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 119 on behalf of the City of Milwaukee.

**The City of Milwaukee strongly opposes Senate Bill 119.** While we understand various concerns over the defunding of police departments, the reality of the situation is that the City of Milwaukee has committed significant resources to law enforcement and to the Milwaukee Police Department. It is important to know that any cuts that the City of Milwaukee has made to its police budget, or may be forced to make in the future, are made purely for fiscal reasons, not philosophical. **In the 2021 City of Milwaukee budget, nearly 35% of our entire general fund spending is committed to the Milwaukee Police Department. In 2021, the City of Milwaukee has committed over \$295 million to the Milwaukee Police Department.**

2021 All Funds Departmental Appropriations

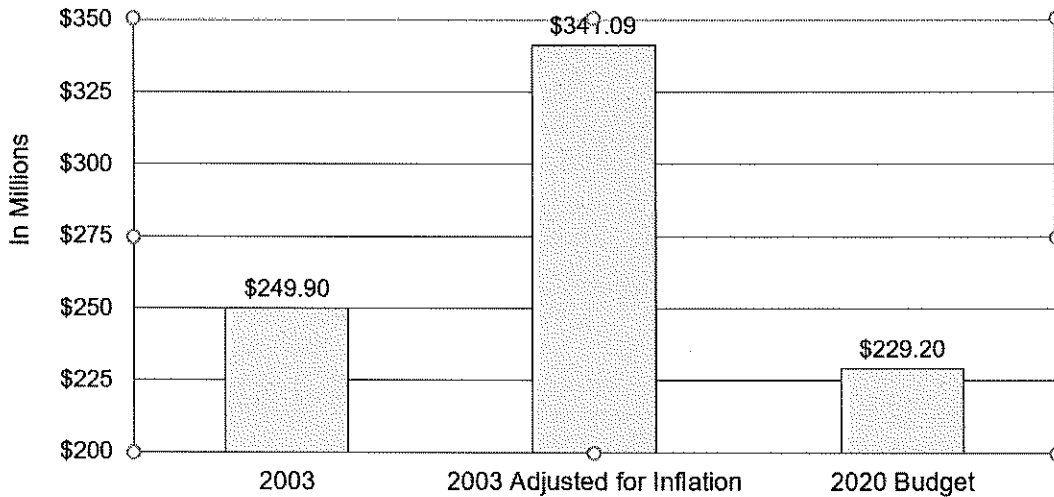


The problem we need to solve is really very simple. Our costs, especially related to pension and wage benefits for public safety, continue to rise but our revenue has remained flat for years. To illustrate the problem, in 2011, the police department budget equaled the shared revenue payment. By 2016, the police budget was greater than the entire property tax levy. This is unsustainable. Without revenue increases, severe cuts to services have had to be made. Costs have been cut over all city departments.



The City of Milwaukee has received a declining or flat amount of shared revenue from the State, while at the same time state revenues have increased. Since 2003, if shared revenue had increased at the rate of inflation, reflecting the increased cost of continued operations, the City would receive \$111 million more today in shared revenue payments. From 2004 to 2021, the City of Milwaukee’s police budget has increased from approximately \$175 million dollars to over \$290 million—a \$115 million increase. The parallel between the \$111 million in inflation adjusted shared revenue Milwaukee should receive and the \$115 million in increased costs for our police department is unmistakable. The police and fire department operating budgets have skyrocketed due to collective bargaining privileges, forcing the City to cut sworn officer positions just to keep increased costs manageable. **If the City’s shared revenue payments had kept pace with inflation, we would not have had to cut sworn officer positions in our 2020 and 2021 budgets.**

**State Shared Revenue/ERP Trend**  
 Decline in State Shared Revenue and Expenditure  
 Restraint Program (ERP) Payments to Milwaukee 2003 and 2020



Inflation adjusted decline in Shared Revenue and ERP payments = \$-111.9 million (-36.5%). During this same period, State General Purpose Revenue increased \$14 billion (+61%). Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics: CPI-U Tables; City Budget Documents; WI Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

Legislation like Senate Bill 119 moves Wisconsin in the wrong direction. What is needed is for the Legislature to provide Municipalities with continued control over their local budgets, increase shared revenue payments, and allow for more diversified revenue streams at the local level to fund essential services such as Police and Fire services.

Thank you for your consideration.

If the Committee has any additional questions or would like any additional information, please contact Jordan Primakow, Intergovernmental Relations Division, at 414-708-6433 or [jprima@milwaukee.gov](mailto:jprima@milwaukee.gov).



Fellow Community Members,

The Wisconsin State Legislature has recently announced a bill that it will seek to pass that stands in violent opposition to popular demands for racial justice that have been voiced by citizens across our state and the nation at large. This bill Senate Bill 119 and its companion Assembly Bill 111, also referred to as the “Fund the Police” bill, would render any popular action to counteract the structural racism upheld by policing and mass-incarceration essentially impossible.

This pending Wisconsin legislation would reduce the shared revenue dollar-for-dollar to any municipality bold enough to listen to its constituents and defund their police in favor of funding human needs and solutions to improve our communities. Targeting Milwaukee specifically, this bill would take the money away from the cities, towns and villages who need it the most and distribute it to those who continue to overfund law enforcement despite the wealth of data that shows how ineffective that is in reducing crime and how damaging it is, especially to communities of color.

In addition to these concerns, SB 119 / AB 111 represents an egregious attempt to interfere with each municipalities’ ability to set their own priorities for their budgets. Local governments should be able to determine which services should and should not be funded, and these decisions should reflect the will of the people who live in those communities. This bill is an overreach by state governments, and frankly, a threat to a democratic budgetary process.

We, the undersigned organizations and community leaders, stand firmly opposed to this assault on communities who are desperately seeking solutions to the harms caused by policing. We call on lawmakers at the state and local level to oppose this bill, and demonstrate a real commitment to racial equity by allowing cities to continue to set their own budget priorities without interference.

Signed,

Milwaukee DSA  
Black Educators Caucus  
African American Roundtable (AART)  
The Party for Socialism and Liberation



UW Milwaukee Chapter, Students for a Democratic Society  
Milwaukee Autonomous Tenants Union  
Milwaukee Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression  
Mke Lit Supply

Individuals:

Rick Banks  
Brandy Johnson  
Alex Larson  
Molly Nilssen  
Dr. A. DeLessio-Parson  
Ryan Clancy  
Emily Munoz  
Chris Allen  
Jordan Bingham  
Daniel Koplitz  
Andy Petr  
Nick  
Miranda L Larocque  
Liz Fox  
Aidan Fry  
Lewis Kuhlman  
Austin Bunch  
Christine Wasielewski  
Miller Stichnoth  
Carly C  
Natalia Espina  
John Sherman  
Tim Swartz  
Anthony Zydzik  
John M Deisinger  
C. Smith  
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Jason Riekkoff  
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