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To: The Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety  
From: Sen. Dan Feyen  
Re: Senate Bill 403

Hello, Chairman Wanggaard and committee members. Thank you for taking the time today to hear testimony on Senate Bill 403.

Public officers are individuals that are either elected or appointed to a governmental office. Public officers serve in very visible positions which can pose a higher risk to their safety than the general public. Many public officers have been hurt or threatened because of the governmental jobs they hold. Oftentimes, the officer's family is threatened or harmed as well.

Hurting or threatening anyone is a horrible offense. Public officials are at a greater risk of experiencing this type of violence due to the nature of their position. The current political climate and proliferation of social media makes this even more likely. Some of the things I have heard and seen directed at public officials and their families, are absolutely terrible. In fact, my family was violently threatened last year which is why I am passionate about extending the current penalty to include family members of public officials.

Threats to a public official are usually extremely violent and oftentimes precede actual harm. Because of this, the threat should be penalized just as readily as actual bodily harm. Additionally, because family members of public officials are at a higher risk of this type of violence due to their loved ones governmental position, they should also have increased protections under the law.

Current law specifies that it is a Class I felony to cause bodily harm to a public official in order to influence the action of the public officer or as a result of any official action taken by the public officer. This bill extends the current Class I felony classification to include threatening a public official and harming or threatening a family member of a public official.

Under this bill, family member is defined as a parent, spouse, sibling, child, stepchild, foster child, niece, nephew, or grandchild. These people deserve the same protections as their public facing family members.

This bill is supported by the Wisconsin Professional Police Association. At the time of this public hearing, no one has registered in opposition.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.



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# SHAE SORTWELL

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 2<sup>nd</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Hearing Testimony**  
**Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety**  
**September 23, 2021**  
**Senate Bill 403**

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety for taking the time to hear testimony on Senate Bill 403 – relating to battery or threat to a public officer and providing a penalty.

Public officers serve in very visible positions which encompass several situations and decisions many would consider controversial. Because of this, many of them have experienced bodily harm or been threatened at some point(s) in their career. Additionally, threats generally precede actual harm. Many threats are obscene and give an indication that the perpetrator is intending to actually hurt the recipient of the threat.

An officer's family members are also sometimes threatened or harmed for the same reasons/intent. Harming or threatening to harm the family member is just as deplorable as done to the public officer. With that said, the penalty for those crimes should be mirrored.

Under current statute, it is a Class I felony to cause bodily harm to a public officer in order to influence the action of the public officer or as a result of any official action taken by the public officer. This bill extends the current Class I felony for harming a public officer to include threatening a public officer and harming or threatening their family.

I appreciate the committee's time and willingness to hear testimony on this bill. I hope to see this piece of legislation move forward. Thank you.