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*Testimony before the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Senator André Jacque
February 17, 2022*

Chairman Wanggaard and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of Senate Bill 752 to provide vital additional resources for law enforcement in our communities.

Public safety is a priority across Wisconsin. Law enforcement agencies throughout our state face challenges that vary depending on the region, county, or municipality. To address these issues, it is imperative that we give our law enforcement the resources they need to keep communities safe.

Law enforcement have been stretched thin in recent years due to an increase in violent crime. Homicides are up. Aggravated assaults are up. Drug abuse has increased, especially with heroin, opiates and methamphetamines.

The Wisconsin Department of Justice currently administers a Law Enforcement Grant Program where 10 municipalities across the state share about \$2 million in grant funding.

Senate Bill 752 amends the current law enforcement officer grant program by:

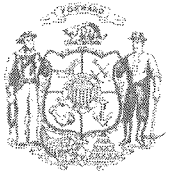
- Removing the requirement limiting the grants to cities with populations of more than 25,000, allowing town, village, county and all city law enforcement agencies to apply.
- Expanding the use of funding to allow applicants to identify their greatest needs such as drug or K9 units.
- Removes the cap on program funding, allowing for a discussion on DOJ potentially increasing the amount of funding for the program through their existing budget, and potential discretionary cuts in other areas of the state budget that may help increase overall funding for the program.
- Improves reporting requirements to DOJ.

The goal behind this bill is to add approximately \$10 million to the law enforcement officer grant program, which can be paid for through the use of ARPA funds. Using the funds to improve public safety is one of the specific identified uses for ARPA funds.

By prioritizing our spending, we can support our local law enforcement agencies and protect our citizens without breaking the bank or raising taxes.

This proposal is currently supported by:

- Wisconsin Professional Police Association
- Milwaukee Police Association
- Wisconsin Chiefs of Police



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The amendment keeps the requirement that DOJ award the grant to the applicants with the highest rates of violent crime and keeps the current law that allows for grants to be awarded for three consecutive years. It also creates a definition of primary jurisdiction.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 752.



RACHAEL A. CABRAL-GUEVARA

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 55TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Representative Rachael Cabral-Guevara

February 17, 2022

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard and committee members for allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 777 today, a straightforward bill created to combat increasing levels of crimes in the State of Wisconsin.

Crime has been on a steady rise in the past two years across the state. Assault, murder, carjacking and drug related crimes are all increasing without any indication of them dying down. Shots fired incidents in Madison alone have almost doubled since 2019, murders have almost tripled. While there is certainly a platform in the future to discuss other options to prevent crime, we must look to implement policies that will stop or deter crime now. Law enforcement agencies across the state are bleeding for our help. This bill provides exactly that.

Additionally, this bill will remove the cap on the program funding, allowing for a conversation to be had about the efficacy of how we distribute funds for law enforcement agencies across the state. Furthermore, this bill will increase transparency from law enforcement agencies, heightening the reporting requirements to the DOJ on how the funds are allocated.

The most attractive aspect about this bill is the pragmatism of it. The entirety of the \$10 million increase that is being proposed over the biennium, to be added to the officer grant program, can all be paid through our state's ARPA funds. This, in turn, will not warrant an increase of taxes or an allocation within our state budget. One of the stated uses for ARPA funds is to improve public safety, which most certainly applies in this case. One of, if not the primary responsibility we have as legislators is to promote the general welfare of our constituents and communities. These past two years have shown that our police officers are stretched thin and have struggled to contain this crime wave. By supporting this bill, we will be providing necessary and much needed resources to law enforcement agencies to carry out their responsibilities.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify on this important piece of legislation, I hope you consider supporting AB777. I would be happy to answer any questions you or any committee members may have.



February 16, 2022

Chair Van H. Wanggaard and Members of the Committee
Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Wisconsin State Senate

RE: AB 777/SB 752 – Grants for Policing - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Wanggaard and Members of the Committee:

The National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) is a national, century-old, not-for-profit organization supported by approximately 1,200 property and casualty insurance companies, including many who write business in Wisconsin. Working hand-in-hand with our member companies and Wisconsin law enforcement, we help to detect, prevent, and deter insurance crimes, including vehicle theft. While NICB provides value to our member companies, we also serve a significant public benefit by helping to stem the estimated billions of dollars in economic harm that insurance crime causes to individual policyholders across the country every year.

Nationally, auto thefts increased dramatically in 2020. In fact, 2020 saw the most vehicle thefts in more than a decade. Wisconsin mirrored that trend: there was a 24 percent increase in thefts between 2020 and 2019. While 2021 data is not yet finalized, early indicators point to continued high rates of auto theft.

Beyond the loss to an owner and the resulting financial impacts – including in the form of higher insurance premiums for Wisconsin consumers – vehicle thefts often have serious second-order effects on society. For example, vehicles are frequently stolen under violent conditions resulting in physical harm to car owners and other victims. Additionally, organized criminal rings are increasingly stealing cars as an alternative revenue stream as well as to commit other violent crimes.

Assembly Bill 777 and Senate Bill 752 would authorize the Department of Administration to award at least \$5 million of money received under the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 for costs associated with additional policing to address automobile theft and carjacking. This proposal would go a long way towards helping stem the tide of increased automobile crime in Wisconsin.

Accordingly, we ask for your strong support in favor of AB 777 and SB 752.

We thank you for this scheduling a hearing and for considering our views as you deliberate the merits of the bill. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at hhandler@nicb.org or 847-544-7083.

Sincerely,

Howard Handler, MPPA
Senior Director, Government Affairs