



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

JESSE JAMES

February 10, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Roth and committee members for hearing Senate Bill 847 today. I would like to thank my co-author, Senator Jacque, for his support and dedication to this legislation.

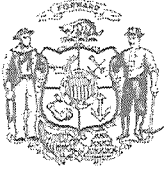
In my opinion, Wisconsin has some of the most stringent training requirements to become a certified law enforcement officer in our nation. I may be biased, as I am a law enforcement officer, but let me share some information with you as to why. I just heard yesterday about an incentive package in New Mexico that may be reaching into Wisconsin and impacting our recruitment numbers.

The Albuquerque Police Department is looking at employing immediate lateral transfers out of our Wisconsin police academies- with NO street experience required. Basically, you go to school and the academy in Wisconsin, graduate, and move to New Mexico. Did I mention they get a \$15,000 sign-on bonus? From what I am told, they will even sponsor a candidate for the additional four-week academy needed to learn the laws and regulations of New Mexico. Once they are done they enter field training, and the rest is history.

When I earned my degree, I was fortunate; I had the GI Bill and financial aid to help cover my education costs, and I had the law enforcement track program. This track allowed me to go to school while simultaneously attending the academy during those two years. In my second year, we took our 400 hours of academy training on top of our general education classes. Today the academy is 720 hours, approximately five months for full-time students to complete the academy. This increase in hours makes it even more difficult to complete the academy for those who have additional responsibilities. I can't imagine trying to complete such a program while also juggling school or a job.

This bill would provide \$1 million of federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to implement a part-time police academy within two technical college systems in Wisconsin. This would offer some flexibility for those who may already have 60 college credits to take a "part-time" academy. This bill would provide more opportunities for non-traditional students; those with families, full-time jobs, part-time jobs, or any other commitments would be able to complete the academy requirements with the additional flexibility of nights and weekends, rather than a traditional "40 hour a week/business hours" type of commitment.

This bill will be good for students, good for the workforce shortage in law enforcement, and good for Wisconsin. I will always be BACK THE BADGE, and I hope you will choose to do the same by considering and passing Senate Bill 847.



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*Testimony before the Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges
Senator André Jacque
February 10, 2022*

Dear Chair Roth and Members of the Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges,

Thank you for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 847, a proposal that will establish technical college police academy programs.

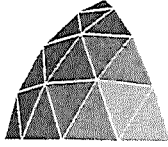
Wisconsin, like the rest of the nation, is seeing a significant increase in crime. Homicides in Madison and Green Bay have doubled. Crimes that have been trending downward, such as car theft, are seeing a spike. Unfortunately, as crime is on the rise, the number of officers on our streets is at the lowest level in at least a decade.

Addressing the officer shortage requires addressing the availability of training. To become a law enforcement officer, a recruit must complete the required 720 hours of police academy training. For some, the traditional 40 hours a week for 18 weeks schedule is difficult, especially for non-traditional students.

A part time program provides additional flexibility for those interested in the profession but may have other obligations like a family to care for or a part time job. Classes may meet just a couple days a week in the evenings or on weekends. Unfortunately, Wisconsin no longer has any part-time academy programs.

This bill will require the Governor to allocate \$1 million in ARPA funds to the Technical College System Board to establish at least two part-time law enforcement academy programs across the state. These funds will be used to recruit and hire additional instructors and cover other costs associated with establishing a new part time academy program.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 847.



Testimony on 2021 SB 847

Dr. Morna K. Foy, President, Wisconsin Technical College System

Layla Merrifield, Executive Director, Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association

February 10, 2022

Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on SB 847. The Wisconsin Technical College System and our 16 college governing boards appreciate the recognition by the bill authors that technical colleges are a key partner in efforts to address Wisconsin's workforce challenges. We also appreciate the authors' recognition that additional resources are essential for technical colleges to expand services to critical employers.

We have two requests for this committee. First, we request an amendment to remove the language mandating the System Board *require* two colleges to provide part-time academies, and instead permit the colleges to opt in. While the System Board plays an important oversight role, the district boards are responsible under the statutes for determining local programming and delivery based on local employers' demonstrated needs. The local boards make the difficult decisions about how to best allocate finite resources, given the districts' overall workforce needs. We believe this local decision-making keeps us closely tied to local employers, and this model is best suited to the continued responsiveness that Wisconsin has come to expect from technical colleges.

Second, we request that, as with most other programs and delivery models we offer, we have the flexibility to discontinue part-time academies should they no longer be necessary, either due to changes in local demand or lack of enrollment by students. While our colleges are skilled at writing for and implementing grants that fund new programs, we ask that the Legislature also recognize that these grants are one-time and would fund only the short-term costs of part-time academies. The colleges would need to achieve reasonable enrollments in the programs to assure long-term financial viability. Each year, technical colleges discontinue about as many programs as they start. That constant turnover allows the colleges to be efficient, responsive, and affordable for our citizens.

We would also like to offer one other strategy to address law enforcement workforce challenges – assisting students with their costs.

Students enrolled in our larger colleges are often sponsored by local law enforcement agencies. In contrast, most students who enroll in the law enforcement academies at smaller colleges, including Mid-State, Nicolet, Northcentral, Northwood, Southwest and Western, usually pay the tuition and fees on their own. Addressing barriers to smaller agencies' sponsorship of academy students could be another way to increase law enforcement academy enrollments and completion, especially in rural Wisconsin.

Thank you for your consideration.