



**ANDRÉ JACQUE**

STATE SENATOR • 1<sup>ST</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

Phone: (608) 266-3512

Fax: (608) 282-3541

Sen.Jacque@legis.wi.gov

State Capitol - P.O. Box 7882

Madison, WI 53707-7882

## ***Testimony before the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government***

Senator André Jacque

*January 10, 2024*

Chairman Tomczyk and Committee Members:

Thank you for holding this hearing and the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 209, supporting School Resource Officers and Law Enforcement Training Reimbursement.

The Wisconsin Professional Police Association's annual survey of public perception of law enforcement published last May found that 63% of respondents thought that having resource officers in schools would increase safety, compared to just 5% who said safety would decrease.

While many understand a school resource officer (SRO) to serve in a law enforcement capacity, their duties often go beyond those of a traditional law enforcement officer. Currently, SROs are employed through agreements between school districts and local law enforcement agencies. This bill will create a minimum training requirement but will not change the current structure through which officers are employed in our schools.

In addition, to become a law enforcement officer, recruits must complete a series of academic training requirements including 60 college credits and a required 720 police academy hours. Further, officers must complete 24 hours of re-certification training each year. Under current law, the state reimburses police academy costs if a recruit receives an offer of employment with an agency. Senate Bill 209 would use GPR funds to reimburse the cost of police academy for all recruits, regardless of employment status with an agency.

This bill also requires the state to double the state reimbursement to local government for the costs associated with law enforcement training, from \$160 per officer to \$320 per officer. I was very pleased that this additional funding was included in the state budget last summer, mandate relief I also pushed last session as SB 848. While recertification costs vary by department, expenses can exceed \$600 per officer, so this funding will provide much-needed assistance.

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) estimates that there are up to 20,000 school resource officers on duty across the US, however, an exact number is not known. This is also the case in Wisconsin. DOJ is aware of approximately 300 SROs currently serving in Wisconsin but does not closely track this statistic. From a training standpoint, this is problematic. This legislation would require that the DOJ maintain a database of individuals employed as school resource officers.

Currently, NASRO facilitates a 40 hour specialized training course for SROs available both online and in person. The industry-leading course includes training in law enforcement functions, mentoring students, and guest speaking. This industry-leading class is an example of what DOJ would likely approve to train SROs.

Senate Bill 209 would require DOJ to develop standards and approve a certified training program for SROs ensuring that officers who serve in schools are prepared for the additional challenges they face each day.

This legislation is supported by the Wisconsin Professional Police Association (WPPA). I'd be happy to answer any questions.