

**Pennsylvania State Police Testimony
House Judiciary Committee
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**Presented by:
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Good morning, Chairman Caltagirone, Chairman Marsico, and members of the Committee. I am Lt. Colonel Frank Pawlowski, Deputy Commissioner of Operations for the Pennsylvania State Police. At the outset, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify and to commend you on your efforts to increase the police presence in Pennsylvania. I also want to emphasize the fact that county sheriffs are, and always have been, our partners in law enforcement.

As you already know, many communities across Pennsylvania are plagued by drugs and gun violence. Obviously, it is critical to maintain an adequate police presence throughout the state, and I appreciate your desire to tackle that issue. Further, we welcome the assistance and collaboration of groups like the sheriffs, who try to keep our communities safer. This effort has to be done the right way, however, and the legislation, as currently written, provides significant operational and structural challenges that must be addressed. Unfortunately, this legislation gives sheriffs additional police powers without truly recognizing the total needs of the criminal justice community, which relies upon the services sheriffs provide to the courts, the prisons, and the public as a whole.

The truth is our sheriffs already have a full plate. They perform time-intensive duties that play a significant role in public safety. To mention just a few, sheriffs are needed to serve process, transport prisoners, provide courthouse security, issue licenses to carry concealed weapons, conduct the required background investigations,

and deal with firearms relinquished in protection from abuse cases. If sheriffs now begin to focus on police work, valuable resources will be shifted away from these important responsibilities. If the duties of sheriffs are to be increased, we must first make sure that their current duties can still be met with the same quality and dedication that exists today.

Moreover, there is simply no need to create another category of law enforcement officer with different training standards and overlapping jurisdiction. In fact, every square inch of the Commonwealth is already served by a police department – either a local department or the Pennsylvania State Police.

Suppose there is a burglary at your house. Who responds? Right now it is simple – either the state police or municipal police, whichever has primary police jurisdiction of that municipality at the time. Adding county sheriffs into the mix has the potential to cause jurisdictional confusion. Clearly, our communities are entitled to the maximum deployment of existing police services. However, they are also entitled to clarity and reliability as to who will be responding to their need for police services. Simply deploying more people to perform police work does not provide clarity and reliability. Instead, we need to maximize the use of police officers for police work.

Further, not all sheriffs' offices are funded or equipped to provide police services, creating a patchwork across the state in which some county sheriffs will function as police and others will not. We already have an unusually fragmented system in which

approximately 1100 police departments operate independently. If anything, we should be consolidating police services, not adding additional layers. Significantly, in those areas where additional police resources truly are needed, the county's chief law enforcement officer – the District Attorney – already has the power to deputize sheriffs as county detectives.

Finally, if sheriffs are given the same powers and duties as municipal police officers, it is imperative that they be subject to the same requirements as municipal police officers. In addition to training, municipal officers must undergo background investigations, psychological examinations, and drug screening. They must meet vision and hearing standards and read at a ninth grade level. Municipal police officers cannot have been convicted of a felony or serious misdemeanor, and their certifications are subject to revocation by the Commission. Consequently, If deputy sheriffs are going to serve as police officers, they need to be certified as police officers.

Once again, on behalf of Colonel Miller and the Pennsylvania State Police, thank you for this opportunity to testify before your committee. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.