



To: Members of the Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee

From: Chief Jim Ferraris, Woodburn Police Department
On behalf of the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police

Date: March 9, 2017

Re: HB 5031 - Support for Oregon State Police Funding

Co-Chairs Winters and Stark and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Jim Ferraris and I currently serve as the Chief of Police for the Woodburn Police Department. I am here today on behalf the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police to testify in support of Oregon State Police programs and funding. My frame of reference is based upon an Oregon law enforcement career of nearly 40 years, serving four different agencies ranging from the largest to some of the smallest. My request is simple; the Oregon State Police needs to be funded adequately to provide a level of public safety service expected by all Oregonians.

As I'm sure you have heard before, the Oregon State Police ranks 49th out of 50 states in sworn officers as a function of population in a state where cities and counties are also near bottom. Our ratio of police officers in Oregon, including state troopers, is at alarmingly low levels. This becomes a public safety issue and an officer safety issue for the men and women out doing the job in our communities each and every day.

To deal with this staffing disparity, OSP utilizes patrol vehicles like "mobile offices" so deployments can occur quickly and where troopers aren't waiting for a patrol vehicle. While this funding is absolutely essential, it does not resolve the inadequacy of authorized trooper strength.

OSP provides critical public safety services to the greater law enforcement community across our great state. For instance, forensic services must be properly funded in order for the public safety system to operate. When forensics are not adequately funded, we end up with a "choke point" that impacts the criminal justice system from arrest to prosecution; that alone can have devastating effects upon victims of crime in our communities.

It is no secret that property crime has a direct impact on the quality of life of many Oregonians. Auto theft, car break-ins, burglary and other theft related crime can leave a victim with great financial loss and a sense of violation and vulnerability. One positive program that was launched by OSP Forensics was the High Throughput DNA program. The program identified property crime offenders at an accelerated rate, allowing law enforcement to swiftly move forward with prosecution in a very timely manner. Unfortunately, because of limited resources and competing priorities, OSP was forced to suspend the program and, as a result, vexing property crimes in our communities go unsolved, and offenders continue to offend, all at great cost to Oregonians.

Other valuable OSP resources are critically important to our public safety efforts statewide; functions like the Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT) and the Mobile Response Teams (MRT), provide specialized support and resources to smaller communities like mine.

If OSP is not adequately funded, drug enforcement statewide will suffer. At least half of my nearly forty-year police career has had a nexus to drug enforcement in Oregon. For the past 14 years, I have been an executive board member of the Oregon – Idaho High Intensity Drug Trafficking Program (HIDTA). The Oregon-Idaho HIDTA provides support to most drug task forces in Oregon and Idaho. OSP has a strong and significant presence of detectives statewide on those HIDTA drug task forces. If the Governors recommended cuts to OSP's detectives were adopted, drug enforcement efforts across the state would be crippled. With methamphetamine and heroin trafficking significantly rising across the state, the loss of these OSP drug detectives could be devastating. For your reference, in 2010 HIDTA task forces seized 73 kg of methamphetamine and 25 kg of heroin. In 2016, HIDTA task forces seized 692 kg of methamphetamine and 65 kg of heroin. Based on these numbers, you can understand why I believe these cuts will have a significant and negative impact.

The bottom line is this: OSP is a very lean agency that in my humble opinion is not currently funded appropriately. Obviously, we are in a challenging fiscal environment. I do not envy any of you with the budgetary decisions that you must make. That said, it is important for us as public safety partners to express to you how critical OSP and all of its functions are to Oregon's public safety mission.

Thank you for your time and attention.