



House Republican Policy Committee
Protecting Pennsylvania: Law Enforcement Recruitment and Retention
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this morning. My name is Greg Rowe, and I serve as Senior Counsel to Attorney General Dave Sunday.

Recruitment and retention in both law enforcement and in the professions that support it remain serious and persistent challenges. We appreciate the Committee's attention to this issue and your commitment to pursuing meaningful solutions.

Attorney General Sunday recently chaired a Joint State Government Commission Task Force examining recruitment and retention in law enforcement across the Commonwealth. One of the first things the Task Force recognized is that recruitment and retention challenges are related, but that addressing them requires us to look at each on their own terms.

Recruitment is straightforward in concept. Put simply, we need more people to enter these professions. But attracting them is often difficult. These are demanding jobs. The stress is constant, and the commitment required is total. Unfortunately, the salaries do not typically meet the salaries for jobs in the private sector. Moreover, the pipeline of qualified applicants has narrowed, meaning that fewer individuals are applying.

Yet the work is vital: these professionals keep communities safe; they help people at their worst moments; and they uphold victims' rights and reinforce procedural justice. Supporting this workforce is not merely an employment issue. It is an investment in public safety and community stability.

Addressing salaries, promoting job training, ensuring outreach, and encouraging people from an early age to pursue these roles can have a significant positive impact.

Retention raises an additional set of concerns. Working conditions and employee wellness matter. The schedule is often not your own, and overtime can be mandatory. Stress is a part of the job. The stakes are high every day, and often you encounter individuals who are having their worst days. There is often the risk to your own personal safety, and you are sometimes criticized for the decisions you made. These are not roles with corporate retreats or catered lunches. But they carry enormous responsibility, and our communities rely on these individuals in ways that few other professions experience.

Addressing retention issues requires practical and targeted solutions. While every profession is different, consideration should be given to expanding mental-health, peer-support and other wellness programs and resources, improving supervisory training, ensuring there is a pathway to promotions and recognition, utilizing technology, and utilizing predictable scheduling when possible.

The consequences of losing too many people are enormous. Experience matters. These jobs are difficult, and years working in these professions makes people better at their job.

For example, experienced prosecutors are typically better able to understand how to navigate the courtroom, speak with victims, know whom to divert or otherwise recommend for programming, and how to balance a busy caseload. Losing experienced prosecutors makes us less efficient and negatively affects overall decision-making.

In short, recruitment brings people in; retention keeps them here. Solving the staffing crisis requires sustained attention to both.

The Task Force's work makes clear that Pennsylvania will need coordinated efforts across state, county, and local agencies to rebuild this workforce. None of these steps are simple, but each is achievable and necessary.

[The Task Force's report](#) included a number of insightful recommendations that go both to retention and recruitment. They include:

- Expanding partnerships with schools, vo-techs, community colleges, and universities to build law-enforcement career pipelines.
- Encouraging higher education institutions to offer tuition discounts, loan forgiveness, reimbursement, or credit programs for law-enforcement personnel and their children.
- Allowing personnel to transfer pension service years between systems to improve career mobility.
- Establishing statewide grant programs to help agencies purchase recruitment/advertising materials.
- Providing incentives for colleges/universities to incorporate Act 120 training into criminal-justice curriculum.
- Providing funding for a comprehensive workload study of prosecutor offices to examine workloads, caseloads, and the underlying causes for high turnover.
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We also need to be cognizant of the recruitment and retention challenges that exist in law enforcement similarly exist in areas adjacent to law enforcement, including in areas related to substance use disorder and mental health treatment, CYS workers, and those who provide counselling to young people. This is significant because the work of individuals in these professions helps individuals and families proceed in the right direction, reduces the chances of recidivism and helps address underlying causes of criminal behavior. When these professions are understaffed, community safety

necessarily suffers. This, in turn, puts a greater impact on the criminal justice system: police, prosecutors, public defenders, county and state corrections and probation and parole agents, all of whom struggle to both recruit and retain. It's a vicious circle.

It is also important that when making budget decisions for law enforcement agencies, legislators should consider the salaries and benefits of other law enforcement agencies to try to equalize salaries of similarly situated employees as much as possible across all law enforcement agencies. Otherwise, agencies that pay well may lure away individuals from lower-paying agencies, creating greater staffing shortages.

The stakes are high, and the safety of our communities depends on meaningfully addressing these issues.

Thank you for this hearing on this critical topic.