

PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE
TESTIMONY
RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

AUGUST 19, 2026



Good morning, Chairman Rowe, and members of the House Republican Policy Committee. The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) appreciate the opportunity to provide a perspective on our commitment to retention and recruitment.

Because personnel are essential to delivering superior police service to the public, the PSP has explored innovative ways to address decreased interest in the law enforcement profession. We have dedicated full-time recruiters who work to limit barriers associated with the hiring and retention of a diverse workforce. Programs such as the Cadet Life Tour, Hill Impact Program, and Law and Leadership Academy offer motivated students and adults opportunities to engage in experiences that may enhance their success in obtaining a career in law enforcement.

To further evaluate the personnel needs of the PSP, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee published *A Study of the Statutory Cap on the Pennsylvania State Police Complement* in March of 2020, pursuant to Senate Resolution 105 of 2019. The study found that between 2001 and 2019, the PSP's operational demands expanded significantly. During this period, the PSP assumed responsibility for policing an additional 65

municipalities, experienced a 38 percent increase in total incidents, and absorbed 55 additional mandated responsibilities requiring additional personnel resources. These mandates imposed essential operational duties aligned with the PSP's mission but were frequently implemented without corresponding increases in staffing. As a result, personnel were diverted from patrol operations, investigative functions, and proactive enforcement efforts to meet mandated obligations.

The PSP's complement was statutorily capped at 4,310 enlisted members by Act 100 of 2001. Act 34 of 2023, signed by Governor Shapiro on December 13, 2023, increased the complement cap by 100 Troopers. This was the first complement cap increase in over two decades. However, as the PSP's responsibilities and service demands continue to expand in scope and complexity, static staffing limitations no longer reflect operational realities. Maintaining a fixed statutory cap constrains our ability to respond effectively to evolving public safety needs.

The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee further observed that prior adjustments to the cap were largely "best guess" estimates based on conditions at the time, rather than structured workforce planning models

used presently. The study noted that most state police agencies do not operate under statutory staffing caps, instead relying on the annual General Assembly appropriations process to determine staffing levels. This approach provides greater fiscal oversight, operational flexibility, and responsiveness to changing public safety demands, including the need to partner with major police departments across the Commonwealth.

Accordingly, eliminating the statutory complement cap would align the PSP with national best practices, provide necessary staffing flexibility, and ensure the Commonwealth's public safety infrastructure remains adaptive, accountable, and capable of meeting current and future service demands. Governor Shapiro has consistently demonstrated his commitment to public safety by prioritizing funding for the PSP. He built on this commitment by signing the Fiscal Year 2026-27 state budget, which invests \$16.2 million to hire and train 380 new Troopers, which reflects a clear understanding that maintaining a strong, well-trained PSP workforce is essential to community safety across the Commonwealth. In addition, two bills were introduced this session to remove the cap on PSP's complement: HB 697 (Briggs) and SB 641 (Flynn).

In 2023, the college credit requirement for PSP Trooper applicants was removed. Since then, the PSP has seen a 69 percent increase in applicants. In December 2025, the PSP announced a new agreement that allows students in their senior year at participating colleges and universities to earn their remaining credits toward an associate or bachelor's degree by successfully completing cadet basic training at the Pennsylvania State Police Academy.

The new program awards academic credits much like a traditional internship completed during a student's final semester. Instead of classroom time to earn their remaining credits, students will finish their education at the Pennsylvania State Police Academy and earn the remaining credits needed to graduate, allowing them to receive their degree and become a trooper at the same time.

Although a degree is no longer required to become a trooper, this partnership ensures that higher education remains attainable for those who seek it, supports diverse academic pathways, and produces well-prepared, credentialed professionals. Ultimately, it aligns education with public service,

strengthens recruitment and retention, and maximizes the Commonwealth's investment in both workforce development and public safety.

In addition to the hiring requirement changes made to incentivize applications, the PSP has taken innovative steps towards community outreach efforts to address the decreased interest in law enforcement. These steps include the implementation of multiple programs directed toward various age groups to provide continuous engagement over the course of time for those individuals with an interest in law enforcement.

The Hill Impact Program is a 14-week initiative for young adults ages 15–18, offered in partnership with the Pennsylvania National Guard. The program introduces participants, known as Junior Cadets, to physical fitness, military discipline, and law enforcement-related curriculum.

A central focus of the program is teamwork. Through team-building exercises and scenario-based activities, Junior Cadets learn the importance of placing the success of their team above individual achievement. This emphasis on collaboration fosters leadership, accountability, and mutual respect.

The Hill Impact Program has strengthened relationships between the PSP and communities across the Commonwealth by creating positive and meaningful engagement with youth. The program's impact extends beyond graduation, as former Junior Cadets have invited PSP staff to participate in school projects, speak to classes on a variety of topics, and attend their high school graduation ceremonies. These continued connections demonstrate the lasting influence of the program and the positive relationships it helps build. In 2025, the program was held in Hershey, Philadelphia, Wilkes-Barre, and Greensburg and graduated 109 participants.

The Law and Leadership Program is a unique, 10-week, immersive experience designed for individuals aged 18 and older who graduated from high school or have a General Educational Development (GED) with an interest in a career in law enforcement.

This tuition-free program offers cadets a rare, firsthand look into the rigorous, rewarding journey of becoming a law enforcement officer. Modeled after a traditional police academy, the program is intentionally challenging and deeply transformative. Participants receive instruction in core areas such as traffic enforcement, criminal investigations, and physical training, including

running and swimming. Just as importantly, cadets also build essential life skills like self-discipline, time management, and teamwork which are critical to success in any public service role.

Cadets are held to the physical readiness standards of the PSP both for entry into and graduation from the program. The experience is designed not only to educate but to push each participant to grow in resilience, character, and commitment.

This initiative is made possible through a dynamic partnership between the PSP and the Pennsylvania National Guard. As part of the experience, a Drill sergeant from the National Guard leads cadets in drill procedures, military courtesy, and professional conduct, creating a structured, high-accountability environment where leadership is learned by doing. In 2025, this program was held in Hershey, Philadelphia, Wilkes-Barre, and Erie and graduated 65 Cadets. The Law and Leadership Program opens doors and builds futures for those who are up for the challenge.

In October 2025, the PSP held the fourth annual Women's Career Expo at the Pennsylvania State Police Academy. The annual event is for women

aged 18 and over and exposes participants to a day-in-the-life of a Pennsylvania State Police Cadet. The women experience a calisthenics session, swim in the training tank, run the hills, tour the Pennsylvania State Police Academy, and see several presentations from different specialized PSP units. They are also provided lunch where they have the opportunity to interact, network, and ask questions to female troopers. In 2024, 42 women participated with approximately four participants applying within the month. In 2025, approximately 24 women participated, with approximately three applying to the PSP that day.

In addition to these innovative programs, the construction of the new training academy continues to progress. Beyond expanding training capacity, this state-of-the-art facility represents a significant investment in the future of PSP. Modern training environments that support realistic, scenario-based training will better prepare cadets and Troopers to employ de-escalation techniques, use less lethal force options, and effectively respond to individuals experiencing mental health or emotional crisis.

Equally as important, the new academy will enhance the overall cadet experience, helping the PSP attract highly qualified applicants while

demonstrating a long-term commitment to the professional development and success of its members. Investment in training is a proven risk-management strategy that protects lives, strengthens professionalism, and reinforces confidence in law enforcement institutions.

The PSP remains committed to recruiting, developing and retaining a highly qualified workforce through innovative strategies and continued investment in its people. As operational demands continue to increase and the PSP works to train and deploy new Troopers at a pace that offsets anticipated retirements, recruitment and retention will remain among the PSP's highest priorities. Through these ongoing efforts, the PSP is well positioned to meet the evolving needs of the Commonwealth while continuing its mission of protecting the safety and security of all Pennsylvanians.