



WASHINGTON COUNCIL
OF POLICE & SHERIFFS
'Leadership and Strength Through Unity'



March 9, 2021

As the organizations representing the overwhelming majority of Washington’s rank-and-file law enforcement and corrections officers, we must build trust in order to support the communities we serve. We do not want the tragedies that have occurred across our nation and here in Washington to be repeated. We support accountability for officers and employers. We support fairness, balance, and objectivity. We want to help build policies that will make the law enforcement profession better and our communities safer.

In fact, Teamsters 117, Troopers, WACOPS, and WFSE support or have reached neutrality on the majority of police accountability bills before the legislature this year. Those bills are 1088, 1089, 5055, 5066, 5259, 5353, 5436. Collectively, these bills provide for data collection, audits, arbitration reform, language around impeachable offenses, community collaboration, and an officer’s duty to intervene. We have also worked closely with bill sponsors to amend bills related to tactics (HB1054) and use of force (HB1310). We believe our input has made for better policy that will allow officers to be accountable to their communities while still providing due process and the tools officers need to keep others and themselves safe.

We remain concerned about some provisions in E2SSB5051. We all support establishing state standards for the revocation of an officer’s certification. We also support removing any officer when the facts prove they acted in a manner contrary to the high standards of our profession. This bill has intended interconnections with several other police accountability bills including 1310, 5066, 1267 and 1202. If we do not get these policies and their interconnects right, there could be dramatic and unjust effects to officers, and ultimately, the public.

In current form, E2SSB5051 will eliminate an officer’s right to due process, and could lead to termination from employment before a determination is made about misconduct. It could also impact an officer’s retirement eligibility due to a loss of service credit, cause a break in seniority, and impact his or her ability to access health insurance. These impacts could occur before an investigation is completed, and clearly undermine an officer’s ability to defend themselves against allegations. For example, if HB 1203 is passed (Community Oversight Board) along with 2SSB5051, a citizen could simply email a complaint, valid or not, to the Criminal Justice Training Commission and an officer could be suspended before his or her agency has an opportunity to investigate. There are other similar examples that connect the authority granted in 2SSB5051 to the other bills identified above.

We want the reforms passed this session to result in greater accountability while still maintaining fundamental rights of workers. We do not accept the false dilemma that we must choose between social justice and procedural justice for law enforcement officers. We can do both if we work collaboratively to get the policies right.

Thank you for your continued work on these important issues. We remain committed to doing this hard and important work.

Teamsters 117	Washington Council of Police and Sheriffs
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