

Testimony provided by:

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Respectfully submitted to:

Pennsylvania House Transportation Committee
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Chairman Taylor, Chairman Keller, members of the committee. Thank you for providing the Pa. State Troopers Association (PSTA) with the opportunity to present comments relative to funding of Pennsylvania State Police operations. The men and women who serve our Commonwealth as Troopers daily face challenges in performing their duties.

While many will think first of the public and personal safety challenges our members face at any given day or hour, and that is clearly of our utmost concern and focus, my members face many other challenges we often fail to recognize or give thought. I am speaking of the availability of resources and personnel that enable us to perform our job.

Pennsylvania State Troopers perform their duties to the best of their ability, but constrained resources challenge their ability to maintain the standards expected of them. Whether it is the lack of available personnel to assist them, the lack of capacity within our labs, a deficient radio system, more municipalities to cover as local police departments are discontinued, the challenge of keeping up with rapidly changing technology, or the challenges of recruiting prospective new Troopers in today's social environment, all impact and challenge my members to adequately perform their duties. To address these recurring issues requires a commitment of financial resources that challenges you as legislators to balance against all the other requests and demands that come to your attention during budget considerations.

Serving as the primary law enforcement agency for over 85% of the state's geographical territory, providing investigative services and lab analysis for nearly every other police department in the state, performing fire investigations, travel safety enforcement on all of our highways and roadways, and truck safety inspections require a significant investment of resources. Just look at the two attachments which show the services the Pennsylvania State Police makes available to **ALL** 67 counties and the additional duties that have been assigned to our department since 2002. That is why every year during budget considerations our association urges adequate funding of our department operations and to address our deficient complement level.

I applaud the General Assembly and the Governor with recognizing this critical need and giving high priority to sustaining adequate funding for our departmental operations. This has been evidenced not only by the annual appropriations directed to the Pennsylvania State Police, along with needed increases, but also with the numerous bills which seek to identify or establish a dedicated funding source for departmental operations and now the Governor's proposal of a \$25 per capita annual fee for the residents of municipalities that rely exclusively on the state police for their law enforcement needs.

In fact, over five years ago, the General Assembly passed and the Governor signed into law SB 237, which became Act 124 of 2012. This act directed that revenues generated from citations issued by troopers within municipalities that did not provide at least 40 hours per week of local law enforcement, be directed to a restricted account for funding cadet classes. This was a hard fought win for directing funds to help offset costs of on-going state police operations and the need to fill our cadet classes.

Unfortunately the very next year, the General Assembly, within the Fiscal Code, rescinded many of the provisions of Act 124 and redirected a significant portion of those funds to the General Fund, presumably to help balance the General Fund, and once again increased the allocation from the Motor License Fund to help address the fiscal needs required to sustain adequate PSP operations.

As the President of the PSTA, my concern is the reliability of obtaining the funds necessary to meet our obligations to provide for the safety of your constituents and my members. As evidenced by what happened to the funding in Act 124, any shift from the current funding structure gives me great pause.

Clearly, the General Assembly determines the funding mix for all state agencies. For a multitude of reasons, over time the share of PSP operations funded from the Motor License Fund has gradually increased, so that today the Motor License Fund provides nearly 75% of our operational budget. However, given the recent gas tax increase, the percentage of the Motor License Fund directed to sustain PSP operations has actually reduced over the past several years. The \$755 million in the 15/16 Motor License Fund for PSP operations represents 16.95% of the total MLF. In the 13/14 fiscal year, the \$621.9 million directed to PSP represented 17.62% of the total MLF.

Recently Sec. Richards has announced the creation of the PA Road Maintenance and Preservation (Road MAP) program within Penn DOT. She has stated that the phase down of funding for state police from the motor license fund would allow Penn DOT to direct an additional \$2.1 billion over the next ten years for roadway infrastructure. That is a significant enticement for holding firm on the phase down of state police funding from the Motor License Fund.

While I understand the interest in limiting or eliminating the funds allocated from the Motor License Fund to PSP operations, in order to free up more funds for transportation projects, the issue really comes down to how do you replace those funds within the General Fund?

As we have clearly seen over the past several years, finding new revenues for the General Fund has been a daunting task for the General Assembly and Governor. Shifting the need to fund an additional \$300 million or more within the General Fund, which would be required to meet the reduced share from the Motor License Fund, will only further exasperate the challenge of identifying new revenue streams. ***Further, a new revenue stream utilized to fund PSP operations would need to be sustainable, predictable, and likely to increase.***

The Governor's proposed \$25 service fee would be predicable and sustainable, provided municipalities continued to rely on the state police for their policing needs, but I question how likely it would be to increase over the coming years.

Since the municipal service fee was proposed I have heard the arguments for and against the proposal. At this time I would not venture a guess as to how likely or unlikely the legislature is to imposing such a fee.

The fact of the matter, today PSP provides police services to more municipalities than they did a year ago. We receive more requests for assistance from local police departments, in fact just recently we have been tasked with patrolling the City of Chester, to help stem an increase in unsolved murders. Additionally, we are challenged with greater intelligence gathering to help prevent acts of terrorism, we must keep pace with new technologies, we must meet ever increasing duties such as background checks, DNA checks, and gun checks. In responding to your constituents concerns for greater public safety our department is frequently tasked with new duties through acts of the legislature. There is no question that the \$25 proposed fee is a hell of a bargain for all that is made available to those depending on us for their safety.

In light of the additional duties that have been imposed upon the state police ***I propose that the Legislative Budget and Finance Office be tasked to determine what is the appropriate staffing level needed to properly fulfill the mission asked of the State Police today.*** The last such review was completed in 2001, 16 years ago.

Much has changed in terms of protecting our communities, roadways, and highways since that time. Before you determine what amount of funding should or should not come from the Motor License Fund, or the General Fund, shouldn't we first determine if the resources and staffing we are currently committing to public and highway safety is adequate and appropriate before limiting a possible funding source, especially if greater resources are needed to insure highway and personal safety?

Capping or eliminating Motor License Fund revenues from offsetting a portion of PSP operational and equipment costs will only increase the pressure on you and your colleagues to find a new reliable revenue source. That is why changing the current funding mix would cause me great concern for the ability of my members to sustain the level of service they provide today, much less meet the challenges of tomorrow.

I would welcome the opportunity to participate on any working group that is assembled to identify alternative revenue streams for funding State Police operations. Obviously multiple sources of new revenues are likely needed as opposed to one massive source. I would call your attention to SB 172 which would authorize photo speed enforcement in highway construction zones. While such an initiative must be focused primarily on enhanced driver and worker safety, the bill as currently written would direct a significant portion of the revenues collected from those drivers violating the construction zone speed limits towards state police operations by funding cadet classes and increased enforcement in unprotected work zones.

Another viable option would be HB 113, introduced by Rep. Harper that would enact an extraction tax on Marcellus shale production and direct 50% of those revenues to the General Operations budget of the State Police, since the majority of the Marcellus shale region relies upon the State Police for the public safety enforcement. The remaining 50% would go towards paying down the accrued liability in the pension program.

Clearly, identifying a predictable and sustainable alternative funding source or sources will prove quite challenging. If such funding was readily available it seems likely to have already been tapped.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

- Maintains the two crime data bases utilized by all law enforcement agencies
NCIC & Clean
- PICS (Instant Gun Check)
- Megan's Law Registry
- PFA Registration
- AFIS
- Vehicle Fraud Investigation
Car Dealerships and Inspection Stations
Notaries – involved in fraud with regards to tax title & registration monies
- Driver License & ID card Fraud
- Odometer Fraud
- VIN Investigations
- Super-load Escorts – PSP required by law
- MPOETC Training and Coordination
- Wiretap training for special enforcement units
- Fugitive Task Force
- Organized Crime Investigations
- SERT – Special emergency Response Teams
- Intelligence Information
- Violent Trafficker Interdiction
- Clandestine Laboratory Response Team
- Financial Investigation/Asset Forfeiture Unit
- Liquor Code Enforcement
- Fire Investigations
All fatal fires done by PSP by law
PSP Assist & Conduct other suspicious fires in your district
- Crime Labs
- Aircraft Support
- Undercover Drug Investigations
- Radar and traffic details in your area
- MCSAP
- Auto theft
- Polygraph Assistance
- Computer Crime Investigation Assistance
- Providing assistance in riot situations
- Special events where local PD needs assistance
- Horses, drug dogs, arson dogs, cadaver dogs, etc.