



To: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Chief Jim Ferraris
First Vice-President, Oregon Association Chiefs of Police &
Chief of Police, City of Woodburn

Date: February 4, 2020

Re: Support for SB 1545
Maintaining a staffing level of at least 15 patrol troopers per 100,000 residents
of this state, beginning January 1, 2030

Chair Prozanski 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 staffing and funding, specifically as described in SB 1545. My frame of reference is based upon an Oregon law enforcement career of more than 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 and staffed 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 near the bottom 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 proper 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 staffed and funded in order for the public safety system to operate. When forensics are not adequately staffed and 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.

The impact of a lack of state troopers isn't limited to our smallest departments. For instance, Woodburn (the city I serve), like many other communities, has state highways running through the middle of town. Presently, and due to an inadequate number of state troopers, our agency is forced to respond to crashes, DUII drivers and speeders on Highway 214 and Highway 99E. This additional burden is straining our limited law enforcement resources and is a responsibility we can't continue to carry. We simply don't have the resources and our communities expect us to be in the neighborhoods and school zones and not on the state highway. This isn't just a Woodburn issue, it is a challenge that police agencies are facing throughout Oregon.

OACP considers the Oregon State Police an essential and critical part of our public safety system in Oregon. They are the backbone that connects us and the partner that allows us to create safe highways, interstates and communities. Passage of SB 1545 is a top priority of the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police. It is a public safety issue, it is a traffic safety issue and it is an officer-safety issue.

The bottom line is this: OSP is a very lean agency that in my humble opinion is not currently funded or staffed appropriately. Obviously, we are in a challenging fiscal environment. I do not envy any of you with the 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.