



**King County  
Police Officers Guild**

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**Website**

[www.kcpog.com](http://www.kcpog.com)

AFFILIATED WITH THE COUNCIL  
OF METROPOLITAN POLICE AND  
SHERIFFS

June 14, 2022

Senator Phil Fortunato  
403 Legislative Building  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Senator Fortunato,

As a resident of your district and elected representative of 750 Deputies and Sergeants in King County, I write to you with our serious concerns about public safety.

Washington State already has one of the lowest numbers of law enforcement officers in our nation as compared to population. Our state historically staffs fewer cops than any most any other state. Latest data shows only Utah and Oregon have fewer cops for their size than we do. The national average is just over 441 officers per 100,000 population and Washington staffs 313 officers per 100,000. We are already at low staffing and the few cops we have are leaving this profession in large numbers. Much of this is driven by lack of support from legislators and continued laws that make it very difficult for us to do our jobs.

Those of us that continue to engage in fighting crime have had our hands tied by a spate of legislative acts that prevent us from doing our jobs. The onslaught of anti-law enforcement legislation started in 2018 with the passage of Initiative 940. If you recall, this initiative was sold to the people as being an act which would give police more training. In reality, this act stripped away protective language which guarded police officers from being prosecuted while doing their jobs. The protective language created by past law makers was done with an intent and knowledge that those who would risk their lives in performance of their duties should not be the target of shifting political winds. With no supporting evidence or data, this highly politicized legislature released a spate of laws designed to attack those who protect society's freedom. What has been unleashed on law enforcement officers, good and honorable people, is reprehensible and abhorrent. I-940 was the catalyst for a cascading number of laws that have gotten us to where we are today and we need the legislature to undo this madness that has thrown public safety into chaos.

I-940 stripped away our protections exposing us to personal prosecution for doing our jobs. Extremists who pushed this legislation have not hidden their desire to see police officers prosecuted. Law enforcement officers see the writing on the wall and have reduced their exposure risk by dis-engaging. We simply cannot



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risk our personal freedom in an outcome based environment for which we have little control. Gone are the days when the focus was on criminal behavior. All of the focus today is on the response, the Monday morning quarterbacks who say “you should have done this, or you could have done that”. This extreme focus on the police, instead of the criminal, has led scores of good cops to leave the profession.

Every police department in this state is fighting to keep their staffing numbers up. The city of Seattle is in dire straits having been the department in the crosshairs of the anti-cop movement for far too long. Every major city and jurisdiction in this state is offering hiring bonuses and incentives to lateral hires. All this is doing is shifting the problem around as each jurisdiction steals cops to survive. What used to be a sought after career is no longer seen that way by many young people. Our profession has been demonized for too long and the politicians in this state and across this country have fed the idea that the police are bad people. This has driven good people out of this profession and has prevented good young people from seeking law enforcement as a career.

Olympia has done little to stop this, in fact politicians there have fed this problem. HB 1310 is a poorly written piece of legislation which disregards real world implications. This bill attempts to resolve a non-existent problem with confusing terms and language. This 5 page document was confusing enough that it had to be reviewed by the Attorney General for clarity. That, in turn, resulted in a 22 page document of review produced by a bunch of attorneys at the AG’s office resulting in further questions. While this bureaucratic and politically motivated mess plays out, crime rages in our communities and cops are confused. These laws created in Olympia are literally killing people. The very people they purport to protect are dying in ever increasing numbers due to their political motivations. It is sick and twisted what they are doing. Policing in Washington is in crisis and we need help.

Other laws enacted of grave concern are:

- HB1054 which restricts law enforcements ability to pursue criminals.
- SB5051 which created an oversight board made up primarily of anti-law enforcement members who have the ability to decertify an officer.
- SB5066-Duty to intervene. This act forces one officer to evaluate another’s chosen use of force which may happen very quickly. For example, I may back an officer who is struggling



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with a suspect who has a firearm. I may show up to back that officer not knowing everything he knows. I may witness in a fleeting moment the primary officer's actions which may appear excessive to me without knowing all the information. I am forced to either trust my partner's decision or intervene in a manner that puts both of us in jeopardy. This law was enacted as if we are out on the street beating people up every day when that is simply not the case. This law erodes trust between officers, pits us against one another, and further causes officers to not engage with criminals.

- Serious concerns exist at the Criminal Justice Training Commission which is supposed to teach law enforcement officers how to do their jobs. This agency has been overrun with ineffective teaching of new police recruits which caused a group of State Sheriff's to complain that their police hires were coming to them ill equipped to perform their jobs. Further erosion of effective law enforcement in Washington will likely occur as a result of passage of SB5051. Of further concern is that implementation of the new certification standards is being led by Deborah Jacobs, former director of Law Enforcement Oversight (OLEO) for King County. Her contract with King County was not renewed after an independent investigation into her conduct revealed she engaged in inappropriate and discriminatory conduct while she held that position. Her background and behavior in that position was that of an anti-police activist. An anti-police activist is now in charge of implementing new certification standards of the police.

This is but a brief overview of the dismal state of public safety public created by the legislature over these past two years. It is absolutely terrible what has happened to public safety and the problems continue unabated.

Most law enforcement officers are good and decent people. None of us want to work with people who do not share these same values. Unfortunately, our state legislature has engaged in a pro-longed attack against its law enforcement officers blaming us for society's ills. It is disheartening and wrong and must stop. I urge you and others in Olympia to help correct this course. If we continue down this path, we will all be less safe.

As a resident of your district, I want to thank you for your support Senator. Your leadership stands out. You have been a consummate supporter of law enforcement and your voting record in this regard shows it. You stand for law and order. We thank you for being a



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beacon of common sense and decency Law Enforcement Officers have, and continue to be, under great strain. We take solace in knowing people like you are there fighting for what is decent and right. Public safety is in jeopardy and you have never wavered in your fight for justice. You are always available to hear our concerns and can always be counted on to follow through with what you say you will do. You have shown to possess uncompromising principals and law enforcement officers across this state owe you a great deal of gratitude for never abandoning us and for standing up for safe communities.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do in the interest of public safety.

  
Bob Lurry  
King County Police Officers Guild