



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL  
HARRISBURG, PA 17120

JOSH SHAPIRO  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

16TH FLOOR  
STRAWBERRY SQUARE  
HARRISBURG, PA 17120  
(717) 787-3391

January 31, 2022

The Honorable Jake Corman  
President Pro-Tempore  
Senate of Pennsylvania  
350 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Bryan Cutler  
Speaker of the House  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
139 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Kim Ward  
Senate Majority Leader  
Senate of Pennsylvania  
292 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Kerry Benninghoff  
House Majority Leader  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
110 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Jay Costa  
Senate Minority Leader  
Senate of Pennsylvania  
535 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Joanna McClinton  
House Minority Leader  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
423 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Leaders,

Last year, I sounded the alarm that local police departments across Pennsylvania were being stretched thin because of an historic shortage of sworn officers. New data from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission (MPOETC) confirm this problem is impacting cities and towns in every region of Pennsylvania and my office believes it requires an immediate response.

One third of MPOETC's accredited law enforcement agencies report their departments alone have 1,229 officer vacancies. The shortages far exceed any short-term impacts of COVID-19 and go beyond our neighborhood precincts; a survey of Pennsylvania's 911 call centers show 1 in 5 positions are unfilled with at least 350 openings statewide. These vacancies are impacting every region in Pennsylvania. We must help hire the next generation of officers for local police departments to return to their intended size.

Since my office first requested emergency assistance for law enforcement agencies last June, I have heard directly from local police chiefs and patrol officers about the costs of failing to act: applications have fallen, recruitment classes have shrunk, and vacancies have increased. Every night, men and women are working overtime in stressful conditions to provide basic patrol services and respond when Pennsylvanians call 911.

As the Chief Law Enforcement officer of the Commonwealth I am once again calling for you to step up so our communities can provide essential public safety services. While you must prioritize between a variety of worthy causes, and current workforce shortages impact many professions, I believe we must hire hundreds of new officers to fill these vacancies. Filling these open positions will make our neighborhoods safer and allow departments to restart foot patrols and outreach efforts that build and repair relationships between the police and the communities they serve. I respectfully submit these proposals, all of which can help address this crisis and have benefited from my conversations directly with local officials, for consideration:

- **A \$6,000 sign-up bonus for new officers and public safety personnel who join local forces in need.** We need to jumpstart interest in public safety careers and a sign-up bonus will attract candidates and make clear we value police and public safety personnel. By helping departments fill vacancies with a state-funded sign-up bonus we can reduce wasteful competition between departments, tackle today's shortage, and ensure a pipeline of highly trained, experienced officers for departments of all sizes.
- **\$1,200 in hero pay for first responders and 911 operators** to recognize and retain the honorable police officers, firefighters and emergency personnel we have today. We owe a debt of gratitude to the people who have taken on extra shifts and worked longer hours, under the toughest conditions of their careers, to protect Pennsylvanians. While some states and many private sector employers have given additional compensation to frontline workers, Pennsylvania has not done enough. If we do not thank our first responders, we risk losing more talent and making current shortages even worse.
- **Expand and guarantee Act 89 funding to cover the cost of training cadets.** Currently, Act 89 only covers a portion of the cost local police departments incur to send cadets to a municipal police academy to receive their Act 120 training. The funding has an annual cap, so MPOETC may not be able to maintain their current levels of support if police chiefs successfully recruit the number of cadets needed statewide. Guaranteeing state support and covering a greater portion of these costs will help police departments recruit officers. The state should explore similar programs for other public safety professions.
- **Create new scholarships up to \$8,500 for Act 120 training** to expand and diversify recruitment efforts. Tuition at municipal police academies can be a barrier for people who cannot afford to start a public safety career. Establishing law enforcement scholarships could attract more people to the profession and create a more diverse pool of applicants for departments to recruit from.

- **Expand outreach and recruitment efforts to attract the next generation of first responders, from police officers to social workers.** Strained departments often cannot take officers off patrol duty to attend a career workshop or job fair. The Commonwealth should establish a grant program to fund recruitment and outreach efforts to introduce young adults to public safety careers.

Thank you for your efforts to fund the work of the Office of Attorney General and other essential law enforcement agencies in our Commonwealth. I ask you to build on that commitment by helping cities and towns across Pennsylvania fill the hundreds of open positions in our police departments and other public safety agencies. If we want to reverse the shortage of officers and fully fund public safety in Pennsylvania, we need a coordinated and effective statewide response. As always, my office is here to assist you and I look forward to working together to tackle this challenge, recognize our brave first responders and public safety personnel, and provide Pennsylvanians the full range of public safety services I believe every community should have.

All the best,



JOSH SHAPIRO

CC: Governor Tom Wolf