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Mr. Les Neri
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Dear Leaders,

Last year, with your help, we sounded the alarm about the historic shortage of sworn officers in police departments across Pennsylvania. I heard directly from you, along with fellow chiefs and patrol officers, about how public safety and community trust have been strained because local police departments are short staffed. Every night, men and women are working overtime in stressful conditions to provide basic patrol services and respond when Pennsylvanians call 911, leaving too many other priorities unmet.

Since then, more data has been released showing this officer shortage is a national problem and we need new strategies to help hire the next generation of police officers for departments to return to their intended size.

Thanks to Governor Wolf and the General Assembly, two provisions in the package we proposed to address the staffing crisis can be funded from the recently authorized Local Law Enforcement Support Grant Program administered by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). These provisions include sign-up bonuses for new officers who join forces in need and "hero-pay" retention bonuses. Other provisions we put forward were not funded but I will continue to advocate for, including expanding Act 89 funding to cover the cost of training cadets and a coordinated statewide recruitment effort.

The PCCD grants will provide a total of \$135 million to local police departments to upgrade equipment, establish new units including crisis-intervention teams, retain officers who have been working in short-staffed departments for years, and recruit the next generation of police officers.

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We owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women who have taken on extra shifts and worked longer hours, under the toughest conditions of their careers, to protect the public. As the Chief Law Enforcement Officer of the Commonwealth, I believe all first responders deserve retention payments and that short-staffed local departments should not have to jump through red tape to apply for these retention bonuses, which is why the Office of Attorney General will help any interested police department in Pennsylvania submit an application to give officers currently serving and in good standing a \$1,200 retention bonus. For assistance, please reach out by email to HeroPay@attorneygeneral.gov.

While each of you must determine the right priorities for your department, retaining our current officer core and hiring hundreds of new officers to fill vacancies 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 know that money alone will not reverse the shortage of officers in our departments. We must make clear that being a police officer is an honorable profession and is one of the best ways to serve the public. That is why we need a coordinated statewide response that includes recruitment programs that create new pathways to policing by introducing young people and the public to all the positive impact they can make in law enforcement and other in-need public safety careers.

As always, my office is here to assist you and I look forward to working together to tackle this challenge, recognize and support our brave officers, and provide every Pennsylvanian the safety and security in their communities that we all deserve.

All the best,



JOSH SHAPIRO