

Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

TESTIMONY ON ASSEMBLY BILL 111

Thank you Chairman Novak and committee members for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 111, the "Fund the Police" bill. This is a simple bill requiring municipalities to maintain their police budgets consistently. If a municipality reduces its police budget, they would lose a corresponding amount in Shared Revenue.

This bill comes about because of the vocal calls to "Defund the Police" we are hearing in parts of Wisconsin and our country. This rhetoric is dangerous and unsafe. At a time when crime and calls for emergency services are increasing, reckless driving, car thefts, and domestic violence are exploding and fewer crimes are being "cleared", defunding the police, no matter how you define "defund," is the definition of misplaced priorities. That's why I authored this bill.

I realize that police services are usually the largest part of municipal budgets – for good reason. There is no more essential service that a municipality provides than policing. Period.

Shared Revenue is designed to help municipalities fund essential services in their budgets. If a community decides that it needs less of the most essential service, it only make sense that they also need less Shared Revenue. That's what this bill does. There are other communities that would gladly accept those funds to keep their citizens safer.

Fire and emergency medical services are also essential functions of government. So, I have drafted an amendment that will be adding a Fire and EMS to the maintenance of effort requirement. The amendment also addresses the natural ebb and flow of police budgets. In some communities, a senior officer retiring often means a higher-salaried employee is replaced by a lower-salaried employee but the municipality has maintained its number of officers. With my amendment, the municipality would not see less Shared Revenue because of that retirement. The bill already allows for reductions resulting from merged or contracted services.

However, if a community attempts to slash costs by decreasing public safety, there will be and should be a financial consequence. The bill doesn't prevent any community from defunding the police. As dangerous and foolish as that is, they can do that if they want. The bill just says that if your community defunds the police, your community will lose the same amount in Shared Revenue.

If you need less of your essential services, you need less aid. It's common sense, and this bill and the police deserve your support. Thank you.

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Assembly Bill 111

May 18, 2021

Testimony from Rep. Spiros

Thank you Chairman Novak and members of the Assembly Committee on Local Government for allowing me to have the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Assembly Bill 111, relating to Funding the Police.

This bill decreases shared revenue funding for municipalities if they decrease funding to their police force. This funding is then redistributed to municipalities who have not cut their forces.

The bill comes after many calls last year to “defund the police” all while violent crimes have increased across the country. Notably, Madison and Milwaukee both looked to defund or cut personnel in their police forces. Milwaukee cut 120 positions in their budget, while seeing an increase in arson, motor vehicle theft, aggravated assault, and a 95% increase in the homicide rate from 2019 to 2020. Even 2019 data from the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program shows that Milwaukee was the tenth worst city in the country with a violent crime rate of 1,332 incidents per 100,000 residents.

Our officers already are asked to do so much and now is not the time to be increasing their workload. Municipalities are making decisions based on emotions and not looking at the statistics within their own cities. As a former alderman, I’m taken back by decisions they are making. You don’t make emotional decisions, you make factual decisions. If you reduce public safety funding, things are going to continue to get worse.

A concern of many communities wanting to defund the police is that the police force doesn’t represent all demographics. Changing the makeup of a police force requires training and training requires funding. We want municipalities to invest in their police force: their existing force, potential new officers, and other ways to improve.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share testimony in support of this bill.



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To: Assembly Committee on Local Government
From: Curt Witynski, J.D., Deputy Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities
Toni Herkert, Government Affairs Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities
Date: May 18, 2021
Re: AB 111, Decreasing Shared Revenue if funding for law enforcement officers is
Decreased

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities opposes AB 111, requiring that shared revenue payments be reduced for any municipality that decreases funding dedicated to hiring, training, and retaining police officers. We object to AB 111 for the following reasons:

- As DOR's fiscal impact estimate indicates, for most communities in Wisconsin decisions on whether to reduce police spending are driven by financial challenges posed by levy limits and shared revenue reductions rather than debates over the merits of "defunding the police."
- This bill blocks communities from shifting police funding to provide drug and alcohol treatment, mental health services or other innovative and creative approaches to addressing chronic public health challenges.
- Maintenance of effort mandates like this directly interfere with the ability of local elected officials to decide how best to balance municipal budgets and choose funding levels for competing critical service needs.
- The bill makes the highest cost service a municipality provides off limits for budget reductions when revenues are short. Police services consume on average 20% of municipal operating and capital expenditures by Wisconsin municipalities.
- Given law enforcement's large share of overall local government spending in Wisconsin, many municipalities have little choice but to consider cuts or freezes to police spending whenever financial challenges intensify due to unanticipated events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

We urge the committee to vote against recommending passage of AB 111. Thank you for considering our comments.



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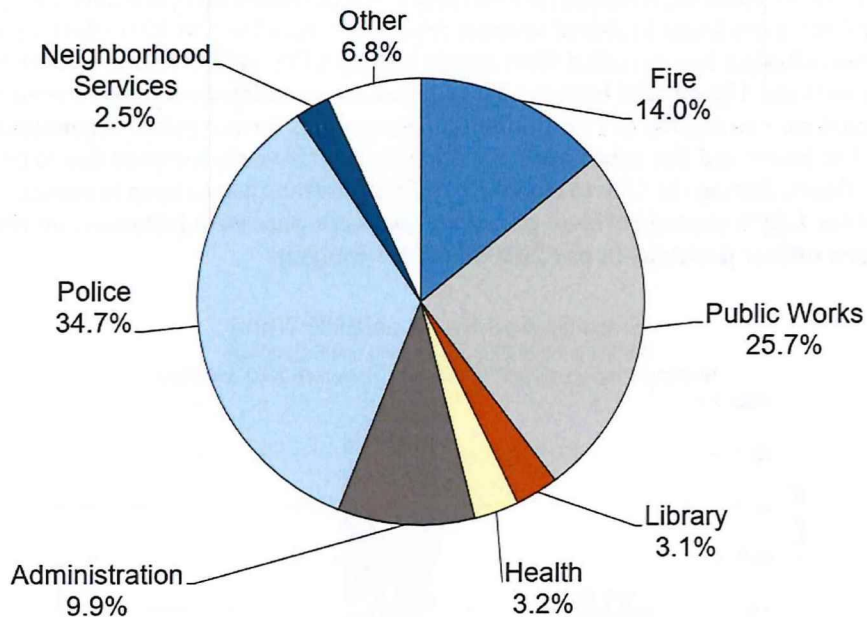
City of Milwaukee Testimony on AB 111
Assembly Committee on Local Government

May 18, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Novak and Members of the Assembly Committee on Local Government, for the opportunity to provide testimony on AB 111 on behalf of the City of Milwaukee.

The City of Milwaukee strongly opposes Assembly Bill 111. While we understand various concerns over the defunding of police departments, the reality of the situation is that the City of Milwaukee has committed significant resources to law enforcement and to the Milwaukee Police Department. It is important to know that any cuts that the City of Milwaukee has made to its police budget, or may be forced to make in the future, are made purely for fiscal reasons, not philosophical. **In the 2021 City of Milwaukee budget, nearly 35% of our entire general fund spending is committed to the Milwaukee Police Department. In 2021, the City of Milwaukee has committed over \$295 million to the Milwaukee Police Department.**

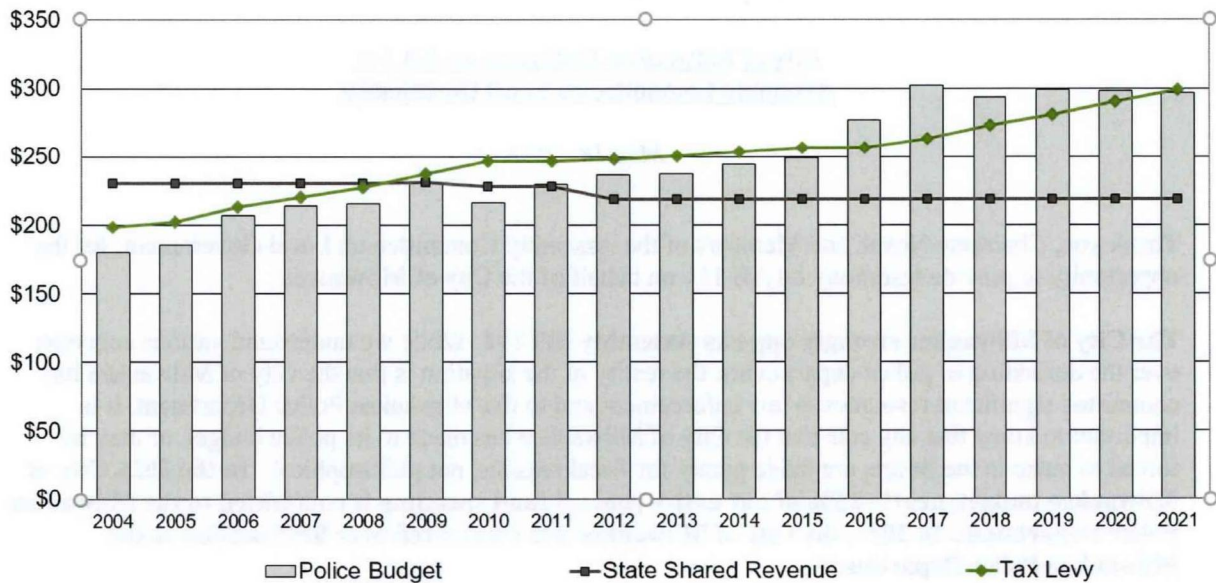
2021 All Funds Departmental Appropriations



The problem we need to solve is really very simple. Our costs, especially related to pension and wage benefits for public safety, continue to rise but our revenue has remained flat for years. To illustrate the problem, in 2011, the police department budget equaled the shared revenue payment. By 2016, the police

budget was greater than the entire property tax levy. This is unsustainable. Without revenue increases, severe cuts to services have had to be made. Costs have been cut over all city departments.

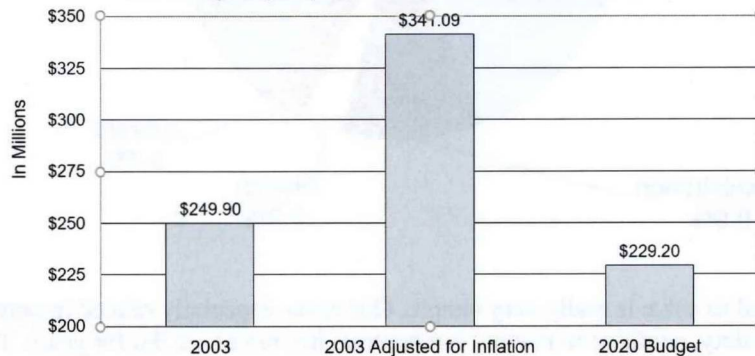
Milwaukee Police Budget, City Tax Levy, and State Shared Revenue (In Millions)



The City of Milwaukee has received a declining or flat amount of shared revenue from the State of Wisconsin, while at the same time State revenues have increased. Since 2003, if shared revenue had increased at the rate of inflation, reflecting the increased cost of continued operations, the City would receive \$111 million more today in shared revenue payments. From 2004 to 2021, the City of Milwaukee’s police budget has increased from approximately \$175 million dollars to over \$290 million—a \$115 million increase. The parallel between the \$111 million in inflation-adjusted shared revenue Milwaukee should receive and the \$115 million in increased costs for our police department is unmistakable. The police and fire department operating budgets have skyrocketed due to collective bargaining privileges, forcing the City to cut sworn officer positions just to keep increased costs manageable. **If the City’s shared revenue payments had kept pace with inflation, we would not have had to cut sworn officer positions in our 2020 and 2021 budgets.**

State Shared Revenue/ERP Trend

Decline in State Shared Revenue and Expenditure Restraint Program (ERP) Payments to Milwaukee 2003 and 2020



Inflation adjusted decline in Shared Revenue and ERP payments = \$-111.9 million (-36.5%). During this same period, State General Purpose Revenue increased \$14 billion (+61%). Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics: CPI-U Tables; City Budget Documents; WI Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

Legislation like Assembly Bill 111 moves Wisconsin in the wrong direction. What is needed is for the legislature to provide municipalities with continued control over their local budgets, increase shared revenue payments, and allow for more diversified revenue streams at the local level to fund essential services such as Police and Fire services.

If the Committee has any additional questions or would like any additional information, please contact Jordan Primakow, Intergovernmental Relations Division, at 414-708-6433 or Jprima@milwaukee.gov.



State Rep. David Bowen Testimony in Opposition to AB 111 and AB 258

Chairman Novak and Members of the Assembly Committee on Local Government,

I submit this testimony today in opposition to Assembly Bill 111, relating to decreasing shared revenue payments to municipalities based on decreased funding for law enforcement officers and Assembly Bill 258, relating to expanding the community-oriented policing-house grant program. Simply put, these bills go against the desires and needs of our local communities, they go against the spirit of reform & evidence based prevention that is sweeping our nation, and they undercut the necessity of working together to reimagine public safety in a collaborative and community-centric way.

While both of these bills would take us backwards in the struggle for substantive reform, Assembly Bill 111 is particularly troubling to me, and to many of the tens of thousands of Wisconsinites who have raised their voices in the movement for a transformative approach to public safety. As written, this bill would punish municipalities for choosing to divert resources away from law enforcement by decreasing shared revenue payments from the State. Not only is this an obvious overreach and an infringement on local control of local budgetary decisions, it also sends the message that law enforcement funding is the only funding worth preserving or enhancing, no matter the circumstances. In 2020 alone, Milwaukee spent 46% of its budget on policing, a clearly unsustainable rate given the numerous other services provided by the City and a limited pool of financial resources available to fund all of those services.

In a time where law enforcement budgets already continue to balloon relative to other funding priorities and where communities, experts, and local governments are choosing to consider holistic approaches to public safety that include proven alternatives to traditional policing, this bill is frankly an insult. While the bill authors may have intended AB 111 as an alternative to the concept of “defunding the police,” instead of taking a collaborative or conversational approach to those considerations, this bill stands as a reactionary and inflammatory piece of legislation that will do nothing but create deeper divides between law enforcement and the communities they are entrusted to serve and protect.

Although Assembly Bill 258 is not nearly as egregious of a bill as AB 111, I believe that this bill also puts forth an unhelpful approach to public safety in our communities. In my conversations with community members, I have not heard anyone calling for the expansion of these community-oriented policing (or “COP”) houses. Instead, I have heard community members call



for increased funding for proven crime- and violence-prevention measures, for the establishment of actual community centers with substantive youth and community programming and opportunities, or for funding that would revitalize neighborhoods and ensure that "houses" go to families that actually need them to be homes. Additionally, the possible expansion of these "COP" houses runs the risk of entrenching community concerns regarding over-policing and deepening community mistrust of police intentions, especially when these police officers often live outside and have very few (if any) ties to these communities in the first place. While I understand that proponents of this bill believe that it would enhance public safety and police-community relations, not only do I respectfully disagree, but furthermore I am concerned that this bill may have the opposite effects especially when this approach does not follow evidence-based practices. Instead, I would encourage these proponents to have serious conversations about ensuring that police, just like most public servants, actually live in and understand the communities that they serve, and work with these communities to identify funding priorities and collaborative approaches that will truly enhance public safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on these bills. If anyone has any questions, I would be more than happy to answer them.