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Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 278

Thank you, Chairman Spiros and members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, for convening today to hear public testimony on Assembly Bill 278, a pilot program to enhance public safety, optimize law enforcement resources, and expedite justice through inter-agency data sharing.

Wisconsin's law enforcement agencies face a critical challenge: siloed data systems that obstruct timely access to vital information. In Milwaukee County alone, 19 municipal police departments and the Sheriff's Department struggle to share data efficiently, delaying investigations and case closures, leaving victims waiting for justice. Overworked and understaffed agencies exacerbate these delays. Yet, this creates a unique opportunity for Milwaukee County and nearby southeastern Wisconsin jurisdictions to test data sharing technology, given the existing level of cooperation that already occurs.

Assembly Bill 278 offers a practical solution by establishing a pilot program to fund data-sharing solutions for law enforcement agencies. The platform must integrate with law enforcement systems on a real-time basis, eliminate redundant records, allow for advanced searches or analytics, and integrate data among participating agencies. By breaking down data silos, this initiative empowers patrol officers, detectives, and crime analysts to work more efficiently, spending less time navigating administrative bottlenecks and more time solving crimes.

How does this work in a practical setting? One compelling example is in regards to a homicide in 2022 in West Allis. The offender was unknown, but evidence determined the getaway vehicle. The analyst separately searched several different law enforcement databases and compiled a list of 1,000 vehicles matching the description. Due to the siloed data, it was not possible to export into one document. The analyst had to then run the plate for each vehicle individually to determine if the registered owner matched the description. The suspect was eventually identified, but not after approximately a month of manual data searching that could have been expedited through the use of data sharing technology.

Assembly Bill 278 seeks to streamline inter-agency collaboration to boost closure rates, ensuring criminals are brought to justice swiftly. If successful, this model could pave the way for statewide adoption, amplifying its impact on public safety. Committee members, I urge you to support this common-sense legislation to deliver justice faster, making our communities safer and stronger.

Bob Donovan

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert B. Donovan".

State Representative
61ST Assembly District



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

TESTIMONY ON ASSEMBLY BILL 278

Thank you, Chairman Spiros and committee members for today's hearing on Assembly Bill 278, which creates a new pilot program aiding in cross-jurisdictional data sharing among law enforcement agencies.

Law enforcement agencies in a common area are often hamstrung as to what information they can access when making an arrest or coming into contact with an individual. While agencies will often sign Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) to share information between departments, officers do not have ready access to useable information from outside jurisdictions. This silo-ing of data leads to cases that linger much longer than necessary. The current system slows down the process because cross-jurisdiction information sharing is limited.

Conversely, data-sharing across jurisdictions expedites the process. Thankfully, advances in technology have brought tools that can streamline different jurisdictions' information providing public safety officers with the best possible information across the wider area. This doesn't just help officers in the street, either. The cross-jurisdiction data sharing can provide additional insight into case files, resulting in more closed cases, more effective crime fighting, and improved public safety for all.

This proposal will create a pilot program targeting large interconnected areas, to allow for streamlining of investigations. Ultimately, this will allow investigators to spend less time searching siloed data systems and more time fighting crime and making our streets safer.

And isn't that what we all want?

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June 3, 2025

To: Chairman Spiros and Members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

From: Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association

Re: Support Assembly Bill 278 – Law Enforcement Data Sharing Grant Program

Chairman Spiros and committee members, thank you for your willingness to hold a hearing on this legislation. We would also like to thank the authors, Representative Donovan and Senator Wanggaard, for introducing this bill.

We ask for your support of Assembly Bill 278.

This bill is a critical piece of legislation that would empower law enforcement agencies to acquire advanced data-sharing platforms. This bill represents an investment in public safety and a commitment to saving lives, while building stronger, more connected communities. These platforms enable agencies to collaborate efficiently and act decisively with access to shared, accurate, and timely data.

Law enforcement agencies across Wisconsin often operate with limited ability to share critical data in real-time, creating gaps that hinder investigations and slow response efforts. While geographic boundaries may define our jurisdictions, the individuals committing crimes do not recognize or respect those lines. Criminal activity frequently spans multiple cities, counties, regions, and states. Yet the tools we use to investigate and respond remain fragmented.

Effective information sharing is essential to modern policing; it allows agencies to connect patterns, identify suspects, and act swiftly across jurisdictions. Without integrated data systems, we risk missing key links that could prevent crime or lead to faster resolutions.

Supporting AB 278 is not only a strategic law enforcement enhancement, but it's a community trust-building tool. With this technology, departments can provide citizens with transparent, neighborhood-specific crime and safety data. This responsiveness fosters public trust and accountability and strengthens the relationship between officers and the communities they serve.



Furthermore, this bill represents a force multiplier for agencies struggling with staffing and resource challenges. By leveraging data to deploy officers strategically, agencies can respond to crime more surgically and effectively, ensuring the right resources are sent to the right place at the right time. It is not about expanding force size; it's about expanding force impact.

The Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association supports this legislation and asks that the committee move forward on this legislation.

We would be happy to answer any questions regarding this legislation.



Wisconsin State Lodge *Fraternal Order of Police*



PO Box 206 West Bend, WI 53095

Ryan Windorff
President

Mark Sette
Vice President

Ryan Miller
Secretary

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Sergeant at Arms

Don Kapla
Immediate Past President

Jerry Johnson
National Trustee

Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 278 **Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety**

June 3, 2025

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

On behalf of the Wisconsin Fraternal Order of Police, we submit this written testimony in strong support of Assembly Bill 278. This legislation, which establishes a grant program under the Department of Justice to fund advanced data-sharing platforms for law enforcement agencies, is critically needed to address Wisconsin's lag behind other states in the ability to share data quickly across multiple platforms. Our state's current limitations hinder public safety, and AB 278 provides an essential solution.

Wisconsin's law enforcement agencies face significant challenges due to outdated and fragmented data systems. Unlike states such as Michigan, which has implemented robust, cloud-based platforms for real-time data sharing across agencies, Wisconsin's systems often lack interoperability. Michigan's centralized data warehousing enables multiple agencies to access integrated data, enhancing operational efficiency and coordination. In contrast, Wisconsin agencies struggle with siloed systems that cannot share data seamlessly, leading to delays in investigations and responses. Redundant records and inconsistent data formats, such as variations in naming conventions across platforms, create barriers to accurate analytics and timely decision-making, a challenge also observed in other states with similar limitations.

The consequences of Wisconsin's data-sharing shortcomings impact our officers daily. When pursuing suspects across county lines or investigating crimes involving multiple agencies, the lack of real-time, integrated data can delay critical actions. Without platforms that eliminate redundant records or provide advanced search capabilities, officers may miss connections between cases, prolonging investigations and risking public safety. Wisconsin's lag in this area undermines our ability to protect communities efficiently.

Assembly Bill 278 directly addresses these deficiencies by funding data-sharing platforms that meet rigorous standards. The bill requires platforms to integrate data in real time, eliminate redundancies, and allow secure, permission-controlled sharing among agencies—capabilities that align with best practices in leading states. By ensuring compliance with Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) standards and enabling access on devices commonly used by officers, AB 278 will bring Wisconsin's law enforcement technology in line with states that have prioritized data interoperability. The bill's focus on retaining agency data rights and providing granular audit logging ensures that Wisconsin can adopt these systems without compromising security or control, addressing concerns about data privacy.



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Wisconsin's law enforcement officers are committed to serving our communities, but we are hindered by systems that lag behind those of other states. The inability to share data quickly across multiple platforms delays justice and compromises safety. Assembly Bill 278 is a critical step toward modernizing our infrastructure, aligning Wisconsin with states that have successfully harnessed data-sharing to enhance public safety. We respectfully urge the Committee to support this legislation and help equip our officers with the technology needed to protect Wisconsinites effectively.

Thank you for your consideration and dedication to public safety.

Sincerely,

Ryan Windorff
President

The Fraternal Order of Police is the world's largest organization of sworn law enforcement officers, with over 379,000 members in more than 2,200 lodges. The Wisconsin State Lodge proudly represents more than 3,600 members in 33 lodges throughout the state. We are the voice of those who dedicate their lives to protecting and serving our communities. We are committed to improving the working conditions of law enforcement officers and the safety of those we serve through education, legislation, information, community involvement, and employee representation.