



Joy GOEBEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 5th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Representative Goeben

May 7, 2025

Good Afternoon Chair Spiros and Vice Chair Piwowarczyk and members of the committee for the opportunity to share with you how Assembly Bill 53 expands protections for our community service officers.

Wisconsin has done a great job of working to protect our public safety employees and other government employees from assaults and threats in the way of passing specific legislation in recent sessions. However, there is not specific language in current law that addresses assaults on community service officers (CSO).

I would like to thank Chair Spiros and Vice Chair Piwowarczyk for their service in law enforcement. I believe this experience might make you both more familiar with CSO's and their job duties. Many law enforcement departments in our state employ non-sworn persons who assist the sworn officers with their duties. These people are commonly referred to as Community Service Officers (CSO's). They are paid employees who typically wear a uniform like police officers. They have no arrest powers, but many have, by local ordinance, the authority to investigate code violations and issue parking and municipal, non-traffic citations.

CSO's do not carry weapons and have limited resources to protect themselves when dealing with the public. In some municipalities, CSO's have been confronted by angry people when the officer was investigating a code violation and/or issuing a citation. While municipalities have made an effort to distinguish CSO's from sworn officers by careful design of their uniforms, many in the public are unaware to the difference. This confusion leaves CSO's vulnerable without the same protections in place as put in place for sworn officers.

The bill adds a community service officer to the list of protected public officials, making it a Class H felony to cause or threaten to cause bodily harm to a community service officer in response to an action the CSO took in an official capacity. The amendment on this bill simply provides clarity in defining "community service officer" in statute to ensure this legislation is enforced appropriately statewide.

Again, thank you to the committee for hearing this bill today. It is my hope we can move this bill forward and provide our public servants the protections due to them.

STATE SENATOR

JESSE



JAMES

23RD DISTRICT

May 7th, 2025

Representative Spiros, Chair

Members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Testimony on 2025 Assembly Bill 53

Relating to: special circumstances battery to a community service officer and providing a penalty

Thank you, Chairman Spiros, and other members of the committee, for hearing my testimony on Assembly Bill 53 today. AB 53 ensures that we protect individuals who, while they have not been sworn in, are employed by law enforcement agencies to serve and assist our community members.

Community service officers are individuals who are not sworn in but are employed by law enforcement agencies to provide nonemergency law enforcement services, enforce municipal ordinances, perform routine law enforcement tasks, assist law enforcement officers, and conduct community outreach for the law enforcement agency. These CSO's provide a sense of relief for law enforcement in terms of taking on extra tasks. Unfortunately, CSO's may enter dangerous situations in which they are not capable of protecting themselves.

AB 53 would provide a penalty as a Class H felony if an individual intentionally causes or threatens to cause bodily harm to a CSO in response to an action the CSO took in an official capacity. CSO's enter potentially dangerous situations just like law enforcement officers. However, they don't have the necessarily equipment to protect themselves if this potential risk becomes a reality. By creating this penalty, we are showing support for individuals who choose to protect our communities. Thank you, and I will take any questions at this time.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jesse James".

Senator Jesse James
23rd Senate District
Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov



May 7, 2025

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

From: Pat Mitchell, Chief, West Allis Police Department, Co-Chair WCPA Legislative Committee

Re: Support Assembly Bill 53, Battery to a Community Service Officer (CSO)

Chairman Spiros and committee members, thank you for agreeing to hold a hearing on this important bill. I also want to thank Representative Goeben and Senator James for introducing this bill.

The Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association is proud to support Assembly Bill 53 on behalf of its members across Wisconsin.

This proposal enhances protections for community service officers by extending current statutory protections for law enforcement officers to community service officers as well.

Community service officers often bridge gaps between law enforcement and local communities, filling vital roles in many departments around the state, from assisting officers on calls to managing traffic or supporting community programs.

Increasing penalties for those who threaten or cause harm to community service officers in response to actions taken in their official capacity will show the public that those in uniform will be protected when carrying out their duties.

This is a commonsense step Wisconsin could take to protect the community service officers throughout the state.

The WCPA requests that you join in supporting this important legislation.