

Good afternoon, Chair Keith, Vice Chair Sullivan, and members of the Commission. It is indeed my honor and privilege to testify before you. I have two recommendations and hopefully some information you may find of assistance in your work

I am Tim Bourgeois and I serve as the executive director of the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards, which is Michigan's POST - Police Officer Standards and Training agency. I have been at MCOLES for the past 2 and a half years, following a 41-year career in local law enforcement

Standards and accreditation are perhaps two of the most important pillars upon which professional law enforcement is built

Standards

The development and enforcement of standards is my agency's core work.

We follow a defined, deliberate process to produce a standard that fulfills its intended purpose, is valid and legally defensible

When I came to MCOLES, I joined IADLEST, the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training

Right away, I noticed an incredibly wide range in the authority, responsibility, programming and funding our sister agencies in other states had. In some cases, behavior by a law enforcement officer which would lead to certification or license revocation in one state was not actionable in another.

This brings me to my first recommendation:

To support the development of nationwide standards for the selection, employment, training, licensing, retention, and revocation of licenses for law enforcement officers and to incentivize their adoption by the states.

I believe the public has the right to expect the same professional, knowledgeable, and ethical service from law enforcement regardless of where they are in our country. Those standards should include:

- **Screening** (education, medical and non-medical standards, psychological suitability, physical preparedness and character fitness and comprehensive background investigations)
- Full access to all state and federal criminal justice data bases to screen applicants. Amazingly, right now due to rules in the Code of Federal Regulations, not all academy applicants are screened against all data bases. This is an issue that has been unsuccessfully addressed in the past. There is a perceived difference in screening for licensing vs criminal justice. Licensing for CJ is different. We are the gate keepers for criminal justice employment.

- **Standards for a national decertification/license revocation index with mandatory reporting,** including voluntary relinquishment of a license in lieu of other sanctions.
 - Helps stop problem officers from moving from state to state
 - IADLEST National Decertification Index has been in operation for over 20 years
 - All that is it lacking is a mandate to use it
- **Standards for continuing professional education**
 - Necessary for any profession – particularly for one that is as demanding and ever-changing as law enforcement
- **Standards for physical readiness including medical and emotional health care for officers.**
 - Law enforcement is very demanding - physically, mentally, and emotionally
 - We must help ensure officers are fit for duty in every way and receive the care they need to remain that way
- **Standards for recruiting and community engagement**
 - There is a need for recruiting a law enforcement force that reflects its community
 - Such a force will find it easier to engage the support of the community, building trust on both sides
 - We must recognize and attack some of the socio-economic roadblocks to attracting recruits from all segments of society

Accreditation

Well run accreditation programs are a proven way to ensure policies and practices are practical, effective, and up to date. In short, it helps ensure best practices are in use. They improve service and reduce liability. Therefore,

My second recommendation to you is to support the development of nationwide basic standards for the accreditation of law enforcement agencies, POST agencies and training academies and incentivize their adoption.

With respect to POST agencies and academies, I am familiar with a comprehensive well-run accreditation process run by IADLEST that I would recommend for your examination.

With respect to agencies, there are several excellent national and state-level law enforcement agency accreditation programs currently in existence.

- I am particularly familiar with the Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Program
- It was started in 2016 by the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police and patterned closely after a very successful program in New Jersey
- It was recently joined by the Michigan Sheriff's Association
- An example of an effective, attainable agency accreditation process, appreciate Chief Hughes's comments re agency size in Tennessee, in MI 583 agencies - 60 % of agencies 15 or less sworn, 108 standards for accreditation
- It is a member of ACCREDNet, a federation of state law enforcement accreditation agencies as mentioned by Chief Hughes

Funding

- Chief Hughes and I have mentioned incentives to adopt standards and training. Funding is critical to make these things a reality. State and local law enforcement training was largely underfunded prior to the pandemic and since then state budgets have fallen off the cliff. The resources of the federal government are needed here
- How that funding is delivered is key. Perhaps incentivization for adopting best practices is a model to explore, to provide law enforcement with the resources necessary to carry on this work. Mandates without resources can do little to implement positive change in cash-strapped state and local governments
- A common theme in my comments has been about successful programs that are already in operation. Excellent professional resources already exist in these areas. I would respectfully suggest the most cost and time effective method to move forward is to take stock of what currently exists, assemble and where possible enhance best practices and incentivize their adoption.

Thank you for your time and this opportunity and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.