



CONNECTICUT POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony to the Committee on Education

Submitted March 1, 2010 by

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Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee, we write on behalf of the state's police chiefs.

The stated purpose of **HB #5318 AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS** is to develop a plan for a school resource officer training course.

We have no objection to training which would assist school resource officers in their duties. We appreciate that the appropriate agency, the Police Officer Standards and Training Council, is assigned responsibility for the task, though we fear that recent reductions in their funding may tax their ability to assume new duties.

However, we are concerned about the inclusion in the plan of a "requirement for successful completion of such course by school resource officers."

First, because school resource officers have served successfully for years in the absence of the proposed training course, it is hard to argue that the course is so necessary as to be mandatory.

Second and more important, such a requirement would constitute an unfunded mandate. Any additional training requirement carries a cost to the officer's agency, which must pay for the officer's time while in training and for his replacement's time while the officer is off his post. These costs will be repeated in future years as SROs cycle out of their assignments and are succeeded.

Many police departments started SRO programs with the assistance of federal grants which shared the cost of the school officer for the first three years. After three years, the community assumed the full cost.

Due to the current recession, most municipalities have faced declining revenues and are struggling to reduce their budgets. Despite their popularity, SRO programs are vulnerable to the budget axe because they are relatively recent additions and because their original funding has evaporated. Making the program more expensive will make it easier to cut.

An unfunded mandate will jeopardize the very programs which this bill is intended to improve. The Connecticut police chiefs cannot support it in its current form.

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