

House Bill 2549 Testimony

Fred Farris

Kansas City Metro Tactical Officers Association

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee,

I would like to give you a brief history of how we have come here today and why this legislation is so important. This process began as a way for Law Enforcement in a very specific geographic area around the Kansas City Metropolitan Area to meet operational needs and respond to requests for assistance. What began as a discussion on how best to respond to incidents of terrorism, critical incidents like active shootings, or WMD events when confronted with state borders, soon led to the proposal for statute in Missouri and Kansas granting authority for law enforcement officers to respond to lawful request for assistance across state lines.

Since we appeared before you last session, we heard your concerns and readdressed concerns we had amongst ourselves and believe that we have brought forth a much stronger and inclusive bill than last year. The last year has sadly seen other national tragedies that emphasize the importance of such legislation and why our state can set the example for others to follow.

Missouri Senate bill 852 defined a “law enforcement mutual aid” region for the nine counties of the Kansas City Metro area and was signed into law contingent on the passing of similar legislation in Kansas. This law granted authority of law enforcement officer, upon the request of a Missouri officer, to respond to incidents where there was a potential for serious injury or loss of life. When we appeared before you last session with similarly worded legislation, we found that there was some opposition, not necessarily for the authority granted, but because our colleagues throughout the state realized the vast safety benefits to the lives of their citizens and law enforcement officers that serve them.

Through the discussions initiated by the Kansas Sheriffs Association we have met several times this past year to address their concerns and include those non-border agencies in this very important legislation. The incidents that we pointed out to you last session are unfortunately not limited to border cities and counties and we find ourselves in a point in history where law enforcement officials in the United States are confronting situations unimaginable 20 years ago. Resources, manpower, and equipment from outside jurisdictions are critical to adequate and timely responses and could be the difference between life and death.

In just the year since we last appeared hear, incidents such as the San Bernardino terror attack, the Colorado Springs active shooting and attacks on individual law enforcement officials such as the Pennsylvania officer shot while in his car, have become all too common throughout our country. Incidents within our own state such as the Jewish Community shooting and the foiled

attack on Fort Riley have shown that these are not just “other states’ issues”. Resources at the time of the incident as well as during large scale investigations or crisis are not always readily available to agencies and having the ability to call on our neighboring agencies, no matter where in Kansas the incident happens, is critical to the outcome of these incidents.

By listening to one another in our meetings last year and realizing that we had an opportunity to extend this legislation throughout the state, we believe that we have collectively introduced a far superior and supported bill for you to consider. The stakeholders in municipal, county and state law enforcement throughout the State of Kansas stand to benefit from this legislation which would allow for lawful requests for assistance, of any sort, by the chief law enforcement executive of an agency or their designee. Proper safeguards are built in and entrusted to those agency heads to ensure requests are lawful and within their individual policies while including those agencies that may be faced with even more dire circumstances due to their geographic location, manpower, and resources.

I thank you for your time and consideration of this very important legislation and I would be glad to answer any questions you might have for me.