

# Kansas Peace Officers' Association



INCORPORATED

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## Testimony to the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee

### Opposing SB373

February 12, 2024

Chairman Thompson and Committee Members:

The Kansas Peace Officers Association (KPOA) has an average annual membership of 3,200 members, representing officers and support staff of all rank and file of law enforcement agencies across the state of Kansas. The KPOA has been in existence since 1916. Our mission is to promote personal acquaintance and co-operation among Peace Officers and agencies of Kansas; **to advocate for sound legislation and laws that enhance the safety and welfare of Peace Officers and the public**; to promote the improvement of Police Service and the advancement of the Law Enforcement Profession; and to raise the standard of Law Enforcement Institutions and Officials in the State of Kansas. The KPOA, like the Kansas Association of Chiefs of Police (KACP) and the Kansas Sheriff's Association (KSA) are NOT union associations and do not participate in bargaining or providing legal services or representation to our members. We do offer several benefits to our members such as training, accidental death and dismemberment insurance, and scholarships for member dependents among others, and probably the most important to provide networking opportunities among our members and lawmakers to keep you informed of the challenges law enforcement face in our state and how in working together with lawmakers, we can partner to keep the citizens of the state of Kansas safe through sound, enforceable laws.

Most of the annual dues for membership within the KPOA are paid for by the agency the member works for. This equates to the funding to sustain the operations and existence of the association and the services we provide to our members. **Over the last four years, 2019-2023, only 17.3% of the revenue generated annually through dues collected by the KPOA has been used for purposes of hiring/paying a professional lobbyist.** The remaining amount has been used primarily to provide training opportunities and other services to our current and retired members.

Are lobbyists necessary? We believe so and that they are vital not only to our profession, but also to lawmakers. Lawmakers often seek out the advice of those who know firsthand the challenges law enforcement is facing and how proposed laws will impact those sworn to enforce them, or could create consequential issues, challenges, or unforeseen problems. We

believe it is our role, as a profession association, to help educate lawmakers about our profession and assist in creating laws that are sound and that will serve the common goal and good of keeping Kansans safe while also protecting the safety and welfare of those sworn to uphold those laws. Not having a professional lobbyist who is in-tune to the needs and challenges faced by Kansas Law Enforcement in Topeka will be a disservice not just to Kansas Law Enforcement, but the state at large. Creating sound laws in Topeka in partnership with law enforcement ultimately benefits local governing bodies as well. Associations like the KPOA, KACP and KSA, are not advocating for the advancement of benefits for individual members or defending claims/disputes made against officers. We serve to promote the profession and advancement of law enforcement in Kansas and to raise the standards of the profession Kansan's deserve. And, as stated in our mission, **to advocate for sound legislation and laws that enhance the safety and welfare of Peace Officers and the public.**

Unfortunately, like most Kansans, our individual members often must choose how best to spend their income and in which professional organizations, if any, they choose to join. Supporting agencies have seen the added benefit in providing paid membership to associations like the KPOA, KACP and KSA, to provide additional training opportunities and benefits at a lesser cost than would otherwise be. While the lobbyist portion is also an important aspect as stated above, it is only a very small amount of the dues amount paid per member. The KPOA has had a long-standing working relationship with Kansas Lawmakers through our professional lobbyist. Lawmakers frequently call upon our lobbyist for valuable insight on proposed bills before they even get a hearing. This relationship will likely cease to exist if SB373 becomes law as currently proposed and the future existence of organizations like the KPOA and the services we provide to our members would likely fold, leaving lawmakers with fewer resources to call upon, if agencies are prohibited from paying the annual dues for their members.

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