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CASE FOR ADDRESSING THE LAW ENFORCEMENT BASIC TRAINING BACKLOG CRISIS

SUPPORT FOR APPROPRIATION OF ADDITION RESOURCES TO DPSST TO INCREASE
CAPACITY AND REDUCE BASIC TRAINING DELAYS

THE CHALLENGE:

The demand for basic police training in Oregon exceeds the capacity of the public safety academy, resulting in a current delay of six months before newly hired officers can begin their required training. In March 2023, DPSST's Center for Policing Excellence published its report, *Basic Police Forecasting*, and determined that the backlog of police recruits waiting for their basic academy start date will increase to 20 months over the next three years even if the 20 basic training classes that were included in the Governor's Recommended Budget are funded (Funding has historically been for 16 classes with additional classes funded by the Emergency Board as needed). This delay is particularly alarming considering Oregon is ranked 50th in the nation with only with only 1.48 officers per thousand residents. This means Oregon agencies are very lean; it also means they cannot sustain long delays in training.

THE CAUSE (CONTRIBUTING FACTORS):

The current workforce crisis within Oregon's policing agencies is a complex issue that is influenced by several contributing factors. The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) has identified three key factors that they refer to as a "Triple Threat" contributing to the backlog and more severe projections for the future. These factors include:

- Fewer and less qualified applicants
- An increasing number of officers leaving the profession mid-career
- An increasing number of officers retiring

The workforce crisis in Oregon's policing agencies is not solely caused by the factors identified by PERF. There are additional elements at play, including the police profession's increasing complexity in responding to addiction and mental health crises, growing public scrutiny over policing, the impact of the profession on the officers' personal lives and health, and competition with other less risky professions for hiring out of a diminished applicant pool. These factors have collectively led to a cultural shift, impacting public safety agency hiring and retention norms throughout Oregon.

THE SOLUTION:

To address the workforce crisis in Oregon, DPSST collaborated with local police agencies and sheriff's offices and their associations, OSSA and OACP to explore potential solutions to the backlog crisis. These efforts involved providing dedicated agency staff to support additional basic police courses during the 21-23 biennium, conducting a feasibility study to determine the viability of a metro area satellite academy and efforts to identify other ways to increase basic training capacity at the academy.

After due diligence, DPSST developed a viable model to increase the Oregon Public Safety Academy's capacity to address the growing demand for basic police training. The model includes expanding training hours to accommodate evening academy courses and increasing the number of students per course. Based on the new model, each class would have 60 students assigned to it. Students would be broken into alternating subgroups of 20 as they rotate through the skills venues. By running multiple basic police courses at once and expanding hours of operations into the evening, venue capacity can be maximized without compromising the quality of the training. The plan also includes two 40 student Oregon State Police basic training classes that would be held at the academy and staffed by OSP training staff located at the academy.

If funded, this new model will increase DPSST's biennial basic police student capacity from 640 to 1200 students per biennium, allowing for the teaching of 20 basic police courses, each with 60 students.

THE FUNDING REQUEST:

Our law enforcement and local government organizations and agencies strongly support DPSST's double strategy model and urge the legislature to fund DPSST's 20 course - 60 student model and the partnership with OSP. We believe it is the only feasible way to effectively address the current basic training backlog without sacrificing quality and safety.

The costs associated with DPSST's proposed 20 - 60 student basic police course model is an additional \$12,839,761 from DPSST's Current Service Level (CSL) Budget (\$10,240,000). For a total cost of \$23,079,761 in the 23/25 biennium. The \$12,839,761 figure includes all costs associated with moving from a 40-person 16 class per biennium model to a 60-person 20 class per biennium model including additional instructors, supplies, meals, and other necessary agency costs.

Oregon peace officers understand the nature of public scrutiny, and they also understand their individual and collective role in elevating public confidence through policing with fairness and justice, policing problems, not people, and practicing procedural justice. The practical outworking of these emphases is what sets Oregon's Public Safety Academy (PSA) apart. We urge you to fund this increase in capacity at DPSST to address the basic training backlog.

Thank you for your consideration!

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