

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING AND EDUCATION

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Mr. Pedro Nava, Chairman
Little Hoover Commission
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Chairman Nava, Vice Chairman Varner, and members of the Little Hoover Commission,

Thank you for the ability to provide public comment at this hearing on law enforcement education. ***The opinions expressed here are solely my own and do not express the views or opinions of my employers, which include the volunteer committees I am associated with.***

I have been associated with law enforcement since 1997. I started as a police explorer and have worked my way to the position of executive officer in the Office of the Chief of Police as a Police Lieutenant. I have included my time as a police explorer with purpose as it is relevant to my testimony. I am currently the co-chairman of the International Association of Chiefs' of Police Research Advisory Committee and an adjunct Associate Professor for the University of Southern California where I authored and teach an undergraduate public policy course as well as teach in the Master of Science in Criminal Justice program. Finally, **and most importantly**, I come to this commission meeting as a community member, a loving husband, and a father of two wonderful little girls.

Law enforcement training and education has been a passion of mine since I was a young. I have formal and informal education in policing, which include four years of relevant experiences as a police explorer for the City of Glendale Police Department. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Upper Iowa University, a Master of Arts degree in Emergency Management and Homeland Security from Arizona State University, and a Doctorate in Education from the University of Southern California (USC). I focused my dissertation research on knowledge, motivation, and organizational influences on law enforcement training and education. I also have nearly 3000 hours of law enforcement training, which includes POST sponsored courses (in-person and online), federal training courses, as well as department level training.

Law enforcement training and education is a topic that has been debated for decades in the United States. Recently, the State of California had a bill introduced (AB 89) that would increase the minimum qualifying age for a peace officer from 18 to 25 years of age. This bill would permit an individual under the age 25 years of age to qualify for employment as a peace officer if the individual has a bachelor's or advanced degree from an accredited college or university. While the legislative council's digest outlines the intent of the bill, which is an interest in minimizing peace officer use of deadly force, it fails to provide an adequate argument for how a

college degree at the beginning of an officers career that is in a subject unrelated to the field of policing reduces an individual's decision to use deadly force.

I find that this bill brings up issues with **equity, access** and **inclusion**. A seminal phrase in law enforcement comes from Robert Peel, "*The police are the public and the public are the police.*" Departments should work to recruit members of their community for jobs in law enforcement. However, departments should also remember that some members of the communities they serve do not have the ability to go to college right away or choose to obtain other life experiences outside of formal college education that would make them valuable members of their police departments.

Having said that, the importance of a smart, balanced, and logical approach to training and education in law enforcement cannot be overstated. When looking at the recommendations from the President's Task Force of 21st Century Policing and the 1967 Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement, you will find a recommendation for requiring higher education as a way to increase fairness and effectiveness in policing. You will also find published reports, including a 2004 National Research Council report, that support the notion that higher education and more training will lead to more effective police officers. However, empirical research does not provide overwhelming support for the need for this level of higher education at the onset of the officer's career when they enter the basic police academy.

Requiring officers to have a college education has not been proven and is unlikely to improve the officer's behavior or effectiveness on its own. Training and education in law enforcement should be tailored to the expected role of a police officer, which is what the State of California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training has done since its establishment in 1957. Unfortunately, peace officers earn certificates and not degrees. The language has become a barrier to legitimacy and trust in the communities around the state.

Areas for Further Exploration

I come to you with my training, education, and experiences to encourage questions that could lead to further discussions on a number of areas that deserve exploration in law enforcement training and education. For instance, I urge this commission to examine how, when, what, and where peace officers receive training and education. Although there have been extensive discussions on the requirements for peace officer training, there has not been an in-depth evaluation of the overall peace officer (basic and advanced) training methods to determine their effectiveness. It could be beneficial to explore the consistency and current techniques of all peace officer training to ensure California is utilizing evidence-based education programs to enhance officer decision-making as well as stress reduction.

Requiring a consistent training and educational program that is evidence-based and supports an officer throughout their career is important to improving our overall law enforcement profession. Recognizing that officers have different educational needs as they progress through their careers, the education and training programs must build upon the

foundation of training from the academy, which should embed interpersonal communication skills and procedural justice principles. The program must be grounded on logic, research, and evidence as well as must acknowledge that an individual will have different levels of understanding of life and how they impact the lives of those in the community. Building a program that encourages and incorporates formal educational opportunities outside of police only training, including courses with professors, psychologist, colleges and universities, could also help an officer gain a broader perspective of their role as peace officers in the community.

Second, there could be further exploration in how law enforcement training is delivered. Enhancing remote learning can broaden the perspectives of our officers in California. Having experienced courses, such as POST supervisory and management courses, with peace officers from around the state, I was able to gain insights and perspectives that were new for my region. However, personnel and budget management surrounding law enforcement training is not only a complicated issue but rather a complex puzzle. Exploring the ideas of formal, professor-led, remote educational courses for law enforcement may enhance access and opportunity for peace officer training in the state.

Third, there could be further exploration in the training and education of public safety dispatchers. Often times public safety dispatchers are the first contact the public has with the police. Increasing the dispatchers understanding of their duty to de-escalate a situation with a community member as well as with an officer could prove to be beneficial for overall public safety.

I am very grateful to be part of the discussion on law enforcement training and education. I appreciate the opportunity to add to your important task and welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Joseph A. Cortez