



Volunteer Law Enforcement Officer Alliance, Inc.

Helping to keep volunteer officers and their communities safe, worldwide

December 30, 2021

The Honorable Charlie Baker
Governor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts State House, Office of the Governor
24 Beacon St., Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Governor Baker,

Since the beginning of colonial times, community members in Massachusetts have stepped up to assist with the protection and safety of their neighbors. These citizen police follow the model used throughout the world and throughout the United States, largely based upon the model of Sir Robert Peel's London-based Metropolitan Police. Peel's seventh principle focused on the importance for the police "to maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police." This principle's importance to modern policing is evident in current police-community relations.

Currently there are over 3,000 citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who have received training to the reserve police standards that existed prior to 7/1/21. These citizens work in either a volunteer, part-time or full time capacity. Those working full-time are doing so as employees of a Sheriff's Office or with Special State Police Officer (SSPO) status issued by the Colonel of the Massachusetts State Police. These individuals currently work or volunteer for Municipalities, Sheriff's Offices, Hospitals and Colleges across the Commonwealth.

Many of the men and women who have proudly served their communities in many cases for decades are now being forced into retirement by rules put in place that appear to exceed the requirements as promulgated as part of police reform. This at the same time that police departments are unable to attract qualified candidates. Often those recruited to serve part-time roles decide that this is something that they want to do as a career. Countless police leaders can point to the time they spent as a reserve officer as the impetus for moving to a full-time position and policing as a career. Massachusetts appears currently to be heading toward additional shortages in law enforcement personnel, and the loss of volunteers and part-time officers will have significant impact on public safety in the Commonwealth both as a recruiting tool, and as a supplement to the services provided by full-time officers.

The Volunteer Law Enforcement Officer Alliance (VLEOA) recently learned about efforts in Massachusetts to effectively eliminate the volunteer policing program that has been so successful there. Our understanding is that with the passing of the *Justice, Equity, and Accountability Act* on December 31, 2020, per CH 252; Section 102 (b) All law enforcement officers who have completed a reserve

training program on or before the effective date of this section shall be certified as of the effective date of this section. Prior to the expiration of that certification, the officer shall complete additional training as required by the municipal police training committee.

This additional training as required by the municipal police training committee (MPTC) has been defined as a 220 hour "Bridge Academy." **The VLEOA takes no issue at all with the additional 220 Hour Bridge Academy training that the MPTC determined is needed to bring reserve officers up to an equivalent level of training as full time officers, as a matter of fact VLEOA supports training volunteer police to be successful in the positions that they hold.** The problem is with the actual implementation of the training, the timing of the delivery of the training, as well as additional requirements that are above and beyond the scope of the Justice, Equity, and Accountability Act. Specifically:

- 120 Hours of hands on training is primarily offered during the Monday – Friday, 9 – 5 workday (as of the date of this letter 3 out of 80 required bridge classes offered are outside of the normal workday schedule – specifically 3 of 35 Defensive Tactics classes, zero of 24 EVOC classes and zero of 21 firearms classes)
- Requires 2,400 hours of experience with the powers of arrest
- Requires new hire physical for existing employees and volunteers
- The MPTC still holds full-time academy waiver authorization after successful completion of the bridge academy training
- Less than one year given to complete the training for officers with last names between A and H
- No reasonable provisions have been made for future reserve officers that will need a full-time academy who have occupations that require a Monday – Friday, 9-5 schedule, who would like to serve their communities

There appears to be a specific bias in the implementation of *The Act* against currently serving officers who had previously been trained to the reserve police officer standards as set by the MPTC prior to the police reform act.

The fact that the MPTC was working very hard to limit the number of existing reserve officers that would be able to continue to serve became apparent to us by actions described above taken by the MPTC, led by Chairman Chief James Hicks. This was shockingly affirmed in an email dated 10/18/21 that was shared with a member of the VLEOA Board of Directors that was written by Chief Robert J. Ferullo, Jr. (ret.) Executive Director of the MPTC in which he stated **"The Police Reform act, as part of its mission, is working to eliminate part time trained officers. That is why the rules are what they are.."**

The mission of the MPTC should be to ensure that ALL officers are trained to a single standard as the law intends. They should be working diligently to make sure that training is available to all officers who previously met the standards they set. The MPTC has instead chosen to take a different path by making it impossible for many to continue to serve. The MPTC is failing in their mission, by interpreting the Justice, Equity, and Accountability Act to suit their needs and the existing and specific bias towards those that had not previously attended a full-time academy – even though it was the same organization that set the standards prior to the Act. The MPTC is not only failing the 3,000 citizens impacted – they are failing each and every inhabitant of Massachusetts.

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We understand that under police reform all Massachusetts officers will be trained to the same standard. Examples of successful reserve programs throughout the USA, where individuals are trained to the same standards as a full-time officer can be found with the Phoenix (AZ) Police Reserve Division, the Dallas (TX) Police Department Reserve Division, the Orange County (FL) Sheriff's Office Reserve Unit, the Orange County (CA) Sheriff's Department Reserve Bureau, and the Washington, DC Reserve Police Corps – these are examples of many such programs across the nation.

The VLEOA and our Board of Directors and our Board of Advisors empore the Massachusetts Governor's Office to take executive action to correctly interpret the Act and it's implementation.

We would, of course, be happy to speak to anyone from your office regarding this issue, and are open to questions and dialogue about this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ross Wolf". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ross Wolf, Ed.D., M.P.A., CHPP
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cc: Hon. Karen E. Spilka, Massachusetts Senate
Hon. Ronald Mariano, Massacusetts House
Hon. Terrance Reidy, Secretary for Law Enforcement
Kristen Lepore, Chief of Staff to the Governor