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Chris Miller

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 101ST DISTRICT

September 23, 2024
Honorable E. Chris Welch
Speaker of the House, Illinois
300 State House, Springfield

Mr. Speaker,

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with several local law enforcement officials from the 101st District. The profession that these men and women represent has always been challenging, and today is no different. However, after discussing with these officers the most urgent issues facing their agencies, it seems many of today’s challenges are a result of flawed public policy. I would like to share with you a few of the items that these law enforcement professionals brought to my attention, and offered solutions to.

SAFE-T ACT

Law enforcement officers are continuing to navigate the changes and challenges brought about by the SAFE-T ACT. While there are many varying opinions about this topic, there was one clear consensus on a necessary change; expanding the list of felony offenses that are ineligible for pretrial release. Officers are having multiple contacts with the same offender while they are on pretrial release, oftentimes resulting in escalation of subsequent contacts due to the offender’s behavior. This is not only dangerous to those involved in these contacts, but also an immense burden on local agencies and resources. One proposed solution to this issue was removing class 3 felony offenses or higher as eligible for pretrial release under the SAFE-T ACT/Pretrial Fairness Act. Additionally, law enforcement agencies would appreciate offenses that include assault on their officers and resisting arrest being ineligible for pretrial release.

Mental Health

As you know, mental health conversations are becoming more and more prevalent in our legislature. Our law enforcement agencies are asking us to do more as a state to get these individuals suffering from mental health issues into facilities where they can be helped, rather than stuck in the streets dealing with the police every day. Make no mistake, the police officers in my district want these people to get the help they need. Day after day, police officers are being called to deal with the same people with mental health issues who have nowhere to go. These people are not criminals, although some of them do end up committing crimes due to a lack of resources, or simply not knowing any better. Is the appropriate place for these people a jail cell? Usually, the answer is no. Our

law enforcement agencies would like to see a reinvestment in long term mental health care facilities, and shorter DHS wait times.

For many of these people suffering from mental health issues, voluntary short term stays at max capacity shelters, and quick visits to outpatient care are simply not doing the trick. We need long term care facilities for these individuals to live and be provided care, instead of living on the streets, having contacts with law enforcement, and ultimately ending up in jail.

Body Cams

On a positive note, all the agencies I have heard from say they are very happy with their body worn cameras. Body worn cameras prove the good guys right, and the bad guys wrong. They have been a great resource for evidence collection, officer safety, and investigations. These agencies are grateful for the state grant funding which supports bodycam operations as well. However, they see a possible future need for increased funding dedicated to bodycam video storage. The state mandates certain footage be kept for so many years, depending on the content. As more time goes by, more footage must be stored. Increased storage capacity is very expensive, and something the state should be prepared to deal with in the near future as it is our mandate.

As State Representative, I felt it was important to pass along these concerns from law enforcement in my district directly to you, Mr. Speaker. It is my hope that we can work on legislation this coming session which will address these concerns, make the jobs of law enforcement safer, and take care of our Illinoisans suffering from mental health issues.

Respectfully,

Chris Miller

State Representative, 101st Illinois House District