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**Testimony to the Senate Ways and Means Committee
In Support of SB117
February 19, 2013**

Chairman Masterson and Committee Members,

One of the legislative priorities for our associations is supporting funding for adequate staffing of the Highway Patrol to provide support needed by local law enforcement. This bill is at the heart of that priority.

Law enforcement agencies, especially outside the urban areas of the state, are highly dependent on each other for the support necessary to be effective in providing both public safety and officer safety. Neither the state nor local governments can afford to each have law enforcement in adequate numbers to respond to all contingencies requiring a law enforcement response. Local law enforcement and state law enforcement, especially the highway patrol, frequently respond together to major events requiring an immediate law enforcement response. We are not just speaking of traffic related matters. The uniformed front line officers of the Highway Patrol along with deputies and officers from our local law enforcement agencies are daily standing shoulder to shoulder addressing acts of violence and other criminal acts as they occur across our state.

As you know, local law enforcement has also been hit with the fiscal consequences of the recent problems in the economy. The maintenance of adequate law enforcement staffing is critical to public safety. I believe we all can agree public safety is one of the highest government priorities. Clearly, the staffing of on-the-street uniformed officers is where the rubber meets the road in public safety response. The government responsibilities to be able to respond to reports of crime and disorder, to intervene in criminal activity, and to assist the victims of crime are paramount.

Since 2006, the Highway Patrol has seen about a 12% reduction in troopers. Over the past four years the Highway Patrol's force of troopers is dropping on the average of over 11 troopers per year due to attrition outpacing hiring. This is a pattern that must be broken. It is not in the interest of public safety to continue a pattern averaging a reduction of over eleven troopers per year supporting local law enforcement efforts and serving the public safety needs of our citizens. Passage of SB117 will be a big step towards that end.

We understand the fiscal demands on limited state funds is challenging. But we believe passage of this bill is consistent with providing one of the primary services of government—public safety. We also believe it is consistent with the needs of your constituents. We encourage you to recommend the bill favorable for passage.

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