



22ND DISTRICT
STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 30014
LANSING, MI 48909-7514
PHONE: (517) 373-0854
FAX: (517) 373-5911
E-MAIL: johnchirkun@house.mi.gov

MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JOHN CHIRKUN
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

April 13, 2016

House Appropriations Committee Chair Laura Cox
351 Capitol Building
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Chairperson Cox:

I am writing this letter to you today to express my concerns over a recommendation in the House Appropriations State Police Subcommittee's reported budget that would provide \$800,000 in "free" policing to the Michigan International Speedway (MIS) at a time when our local municipal and county police agencies are struggling to meet their own public safety obligations to the residents of the communities they serve. I believe that while this proposed budget line item is well-intentioned, I wholeheartedly believe that this proposed MIS funding would serve a more cost effective role as a grant to help supplement police resources already available in our communities to better keep the public safe.

Since 2008, the taxpayers of the state of Michigan have paid over \$5 million for Michigan State Police (MSP) patrols for events at the Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn, Michigan. This funding goes to provide traffic control and aerial support for racing events in Brooklyn, Michigan that benefits the local community there. However, this subsidization comes at a cost. Taxpayers throughout the state are picking up the tab for these events while gaining nothing in return. Some law enforcement officials even told me that MIS reimburses local police departments and the local sheriff's offices for its costs in patrolling the events held there but not the Michigan State Police. Meanwhile, local police agencies are struggling and going to local taxpayers looking for millage money to fund its activities. Over the years, there has been no shortage of communities that have looked to voters for law enforcement millages to address the funding challenges they face. For example, in my community, when I was the Mayor Pro-Tem of Roseville in 2007, I had 96 police officers and 22 command officers. Today, the city of Roseville has budgeted for 60 police officers and 15 in command, even after a public safety millage passed in May 2016. Meanwhile, the city of Warren, which I also represent in the 22nd District, passed a public safety millage in 2012 just to maintain their current staffing levels.

Yet, when the locals are hurting, the Michigan State Police budget has increased. According to an article in the Detroit News (from April 10, 2017 titled *State Police land ex-UM football player as retirement wave looms*), MSP increased its trooper strength from 1,048 in Fiscal Year 2007 to 1,112 troopers in Fiscal Year 2017. While the Michigan State Police serves a valuable

role in law enforcement, presented with these facts, providing “free” policing services for a for-profit event is unfair to the many communities that are struggling to fund police.

I believe that the MIS should reimburse the Michigan State Police for the costs of event activities at minimum and that the \$800,000 in funds be appropriated for local policing activities. In my opinion, this would be a better use of these funds and would make a significant impact on the safety of our communities, especially as we further discuss corrections reform. There are many ways to go about doing this. For example, it could go towards distressed, high crime communities for grants to pay for overtime shifts for existing local police officers to patrol or to county sheriffs to conduct secondary roads patrol. It could go towards the existing revenue sharing formula. There could be other options that other members of the Michigan Legislature can think of to help our struggling local police agencies deal with manpower shortages to keep our residents safe. But I believe you will agree, a discussion needs to occur on this issue.

As a retired Wayne County Sheriff's Deputy with over 29 years of experience, I have had the opportunity to patrol many of the cities in Wayne County. While patrolling, I have gotten to know the communities and the neighborhoods better. The officers in the local police agencies have a better understanding of the needs of that particular community and where to invest the time and public safety resources available with community-based feedback to keep the community safe. This \$800,000 would be much better spent helping locals in their own law enforcement efforts rather than providing subsidies for road and aerial support for racing events at MIS, who have their own local and county agencies to handle the task.

Last term, former House Speaker Cotter created a workgroup on law enforcement to discuss the future of policing in the state. More specifically, the workgroup was tasked with exploring the varying levels of policing in Michigan and to determine the appropriate roles for state and local law enforcement agencies. Time ran out last term to meet but I believe that the over \$5 million in state taxpayer spending for State Police assistance to events at MIS shows the importance of reconvening this discussion and figuring out the best way to handle law enforcement at all levels of government. For example, MSP provides 16 troopers and 4 Sergeants to patrol Holly, Rose and Groveland Townships (Population: 6200), who in turn do not pay property taxes for police patrols like their neighbor, the village of Holly, as most communities in Michigan do. In Royal Oak Township, MSP provides 12 troopers for the Charter Township of Royal Oak (Population: 2500) while the city of Royal Oak has their own police department that residents pay for. This also happens in Macomb County, where Bruce, Ray, Armada and Richmond Townships benefit in a similar manner. Communities in southern Macomb County, such as Roseville and St. Clair Shores, do not see Macomb County Sheriff's patrols yet have to pay for the sheriff's department. Examples like these are in full abundance and shows the need for an in-depth dialogue on the future of policing. I hope you will join me in an effort to urge Speaker Leonard to reintroduce this workgroup and to also reject the subcommittee's inclusion of \$800,000 in funding for MIS in the budget and use that money instead to help fund police efforts at the local level.

I thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Chirkun". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being more prominent than the last name "Chirkun".

John Chirkun
State Representative
District 22

JC/zb

CC: Members of the House Appropriations Committee
State Representative Jim Runestad
State Representative Klint Kesto