

Senate Judiciary Committee

Pete Mulvey 271-4063

HB 778-FN, authorizing the director of the police standards and training council to detail law enforcement training specialists employed by the council for law enforcement and crowd control services.

Hearing Date: April 1, 2025

Time Opened: 3:22 p.m.

Time Closed: 3:34 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gannon, Abbas, McConkey and Altschiller

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Reardon

Bill Analysis: This bill authorizes the director of the police standards and training council to detail law enforcement training specialists employed by the council for law enforcement and crowd control services, upon request of the state, county, or local law enforcement agency of jurisdiction.

This bill is a request of the police standards and training council.

Sponsors:

Rep. Roy

Rep. D. Mannion

Sen. Birdsell

Who supports the bill: Rep. Jonah O. Wheeler, John V. Scippa, Mark S. O'Brien, Sen. Regina Birdsell, and Janet Lucas.

Who opposes the bill: Jane Smith and Megan Haffner.

Who is neutral on the bill: N/A

Summary of testimony:

Representative Terry Roy

Rockingham- District 32

- Representative Roy stated that HB 778-FN was at the request of Director Scippa of the Police Standards and Training Council.
- Rep. Roy explained that the bill addressed the need to maintain the best and brightest teachers for police recruits, and the fact that it was difficult to do considering that a job with the Police Standards and Training Council was an automatic pay cut from regular jobs within law enforcement.

- Under the current regulations of the academy, sworn officers employed in training cannot take enforcement or security details.
- HB 778-FN would simply allow them to take details to supplement their income.

John Scippa and Mark O'Brien

Director and Assistant Director of New Hampshire Police Standards and Training Council

- Director Scippa and Assistant Director O'Brien spoke in favor of HB 778-FN.
- Dir. Scippa stated that the bill would allow the agency to address concerns with the ability to supply staffing to law enforcement agencies that required assistance with certain events.
 - The Council often got calls from the Hampton Police Department, Loudon Police Department, and Gilford Police Department seeking assistance with staffing issues.
 - While the Council would love to send help to those communities, there was nothing in statute that allowed them to do so.
- Dir. Scippa reiterated that teachers at the academy were trained law enforcement officers that had left positions with police departments, and in doing so, had lost the ability to earn additional income.
 - HB 778-FN would allow them the opportunity to make a little extra money.
- Senator Gannon asked if Asst Dir. O'Brien wished to testify further.
 - Asst Dir. O'Brien replied that he believed Dir. Scippa said all that was necessary.
- Senator Altschiller asked for clarification as to whether "law enforcement training specialist" was also a term for teacher.
 - Dir. Scippa stated that they had a dual role; they were law enforcement officers and instructors at the NH Police Academy.
- Senator Altschiller sought confirmation that HB 778-FN would not be applicable to teaching assistants.
 - Dir. Scippa confirmed that it would not.
- Senator McConkey asked how many personnel were assigned to the academy.
 - Dir. Scippa replied that they currently had twelve full-time police officers that worked as training specialists.
- Senator McConkey asked if it was the goal for personnel to be able to assist in a limited capacity for other needs in other departments.
 - Dir. Scippa confirmed that was the goal and reiterated that their primary responsibility would remain with the academy.

Senator Regina Birdsell

Senate District 19

- Senator Birdsell stated that the Committee should have a copy of amendment 2025-1382s, which amended language relevant to the Violent Action Disability Retirement provision to correct the misconception that individuals with PTSD would be covered under HB 778-FN.
 - PTSD was already covered under a different statute relative to workers' compensation.
 - The amendment changed the language to cover individuals who were injured from a violent act.
- Senator Altschiller asked why mental incapacitation should be removed from the provision.
 - Senator Birdsell responded that PTSD was already covered under other retirement statutes and the bill was only relevant to officers that had suffered a violent act such as being shot or hit by a car, purposefully.
- Senator Altschiller asked if the coverage for someone who had been shot and suffered from PTSD as result would come from a different statute.
 - Senator Birdsell responded that PTSD was covered under workers' compensation disability.

- If an officer were disabled from a violent act as determined by the Commissioner of Safety, they may recommend the retirement system to start processing their case.
- Senator Altschiller asked if the statute that already addressed PTSD encompassed incapacitation from further performance of duty due to that condition.
 - Senator Birdsell shared her understanding that if workers' compensation determined an individual to be incapacitated by PTSD, they provided confirmation of their status, enabling them to apply for disability retirement.
 - The disability retirement provision under HB 778-FN was strictly applicable to the result of violent action.
 - Senator Birdsell added that increasing the benefit for beneficiaries was contemplated.
- Senator Altschiller hoped to ensure that people were not edged out of benefits.
 - Senator Birdsell said that the PTSD commission, which she chaired, considered the same and agreed that there should be separate provisions for mental incapacitation and violent injury as a result.

PM

Date Hearing Report completed: April 4, 2025