



Honorable Terry Kilgore,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the nearly 500 Police Officers and Detectives proudly represented by the **Virginia Beach Police Benevolent Association (PBA)**. I am respectfully asking that you include local municipality police officers in HB7001 of the 2021 Special Session (II), specifically making these officers eligible for the bonuses offered to the State Police and Sheriff's Officers. As you know, and appreciate, the Law Enforcement profession is filled with many hazards to the officer's physical safety. Over to the last year and a half, we have learned of a new risk. The risk to their health. As the covid-19 crisis unfolded across our commonwealth, and our nation, these officers stood on the front lines of their communities without the option to work from home or the ability to social distance. Often, they did so without the proper protection being provided. Today, they continue to "Protect and Serve" even as a new strain of the virus spreads. The number of Law Enforcement Officers who died in the line of duty in 2020 increased 96% over the previous year. In the category of "Other" causes, there were *145 confirmed Covid-19 deaths, this is an increase in this category of 300%*. The year 2020 had the most line of duty deaths since 1974. The fact that the Covid-19 deaths contributed to this sad total cannot be ignored.

Each officer has bravely accepted risk as a part of their lives. The covid-19 pandemic is a risk that our officers were never trained to assume. But assume it they have. Unfortunately, this is also a risk that their loved ones have had to assume as well. In 2020 the "Safeguarding America's First Responders Act" was signed into law, thus adding Covid-19 to the "Public Safety Officer's Benefit (PSOB).

This law, *S. 3607*, clearly recognizes the risk that Police Officers face due to this pandemic. Upon its signing Senator Grassley stated, "The ongoing pandemic has increased the risk that America's police officers and first responders face every day to keep our communities safe and healthy. Sadly, some have contracted COVID-19 while on the job and succumbed to the virus." Senator Corey Booker stated, "First responders never hesitate to answer the call, and that the country must always be willing to answer theirs. While this pandemic has changed daily life for so many Americans, our brave first responders have continued to put their lives on the line to protect our communities – and they have done so at significantly increased risk to themselves and to their families,"

I ask that you show your appreciation to these brave officers by including them in this legislation.

Sincerely and with gratitude,

Brian R. Luciano, President