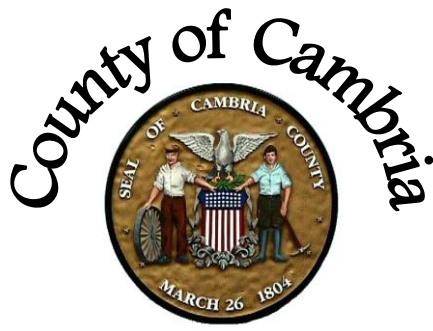


**Gregory J. Neugebauer**  
District Attorney



**Heath M. Long**  
First Assistant

**Warren L. Crilly, III**  
Chief Deputy, Appellate Division

## Office of the District Attorney

200 South Center Street, Ebensburg, PA 15931  
Phone: (814) 472-1680 • Fax: (814) 472-7134

April 24, 2022

Senate Majority Policy Committee  
Via email to *Christine L. Zubeck, czubeck@pasen.gov*

Dear Senate Majority Policy Committee,

I first want to thank the Committee for the invitation to speak at the hearing to be held in the Cambria County Courthouse on April 25, 2022. I appreciate both the opportunity, and the thoughtfulness the Committee has shown to come to Ebensburg for input. Please accept this letter as written testimony that I will gladly expound upon at the hearing.

One of the primary issues facing law enforcement is the difficulty that departments have in recruiting and retaining officers. While we continue to enjoy, as a whole, good citizen/police relations in Cambria County, there are just not that many people looking to become police officers. This issue, like most, is very complex, but I believe it is created by a combination of police being attacked nationwide, relatively low pay, high stress, and the burdens placed on family life. There is also the up-front cost to go to an academy to receive proper training, which is something that not everyone can afford. Even after someone becomes a new officer, there is mandated overtime, long hours, and over-night shifts followed by court hearings the next morning or afternoon. It is not uncommon for officers to appear for a scheduled court appearance with just a few hours of sleep. All of these issues, over time, wear on even the most dedicated of individual. While money doesn't solve all of the issues, investment in recruitment and retention of police is of vital importance, and is reaching a critical level.

Another issue that effects police departments is the cost of technology<sup>1</sup> and protective equipment. Body cams, cellular phone extraction equipment, effective radios, protective equipment, including tazers and vests, software, and other hardware, are all very expensive. Budgets don't allow for timely upgrades and, in some cases, the proper outfitting of new officers. To put this in perspective, in Cambria County, we have well-trained SERT (Special Emergency Response Team), who require specialized tactical vests. The entire team is due in the next couple of years to replace their soon to be expired vests. The total cost for the team is in excess of \$40,000, which is more than the entire SERT budget for one year.

The reality is that, particularly in more population dense areas, the lack of officers creates a sense among bad-actors that their likelihood of being caught is diminished. The more brazen and confident criminals are, the worse crimes they are willing to commit. Furthermore, over-worked departments are unable to build community relationships as they had in the past. It is much easier for a citizen to come forward with information to an officer that they know and trust. Many unsolved violent crimes would be solved if citizens were willing to come forward. In the very simplest of terms, the more officers you have on regular patrol, the less crime there is going to be in any given area. Anecdotally we have

---

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted as well that Prosecutors' offices struggle with the cost of technology as well. Case management software, computers, information storage, and related costs are significant, and upgrades are difficult to make given tight budget constraints.

**Gregory J. Neugebauer**  
District Attorney



**Heath M. Long**  
First Assistant

**Warren L. Crilly, III**  
Chief Deputy, Appellate Division

## Office of the District Attorney

200 South Center Street, Ebensburg, PA 15931

Phone: (814) 472-1680 • Fax: (814) 472-7134

seen that locally, with saturation patrols being an effective tool. However, resources and budgets are not there to do those types of activities on a regular basis.

Other issues of local concern which lead to violent crime include the flow of drugs and guns from other areas (particularly Philadelphia) to Johnstown, drug addiction, and untreated mental health. I would be happy to speak more to these issues at the hearing.

I am blessed and honored to get to serve alongside many dedicated, professional, and competent local, state, and federal law enforcement officers, officials, and prosecutors every day. Law enforcement is an endeavor that is all day, every day, and never takes a break. Society must continue to support all of those efforts. The stronger law enforcement is, the better our neighborhoods and communities are.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to address these issues. I look forward to a fruitful discussion, and am happy to touch on any related topic that the Committee desires.

Very truly yours,

*/s/ Gregory J. Neugebauer*  
Gregory J. Neugebauer, Esq.  
District Attorney of Cambria County