

# Police reform

2022



Continue supporting local control over city law enforcement policies to meet the needs of each community, while recognizing the need for clarification of certain statewide reforms.

## Background:

Cities employ most law enforcement officers in Washington state, which is why cities are deeply involved in law enforcement reforms. City officials and police departments need the ability and clarity to directly implement state requirements and ensure accountability to our communities. Cities have an ongoing commitment to communities of color and seek a deeper focus on equity and diversity in law enforcement policies.

In 2021, the Legislature adopted a package of reforms related to policing. Some aspects of these changes remain unresolved and unclear. City officials and law enforcement officers need clarity and understanding of what is expected of them. And cities need time and resources to provide training on the many changes passed. Several areas remain where the Legislature can provide clarification for cities.

## Strong cities need:

### 1. Clarification that law enforcement officers have authority to:

- **Use nonlethal alternatives** – Specifically, bean bag rounds need to be explicitly authorized.
- **Conduct a brief, investigative hold** – During the early moments of an investigation, while officers are assessing the situation, a person may not be placed under arrest but is not free to leave. This allows the police to briefly detain a person based on reasonable suspicion of involvement in criminal activity.
- **Use force for noncriminal activity related to community caretaking** – Law enforcement

officers are called upon daily to assist people in need. This could be a person suffering from dementia, a teen runaway, or to provide a welfare check on an elderly neighbor who fails to answer after repeated attempts at contact. At times, these contacts may require forced entry or minimal use of force to protect those individuals.

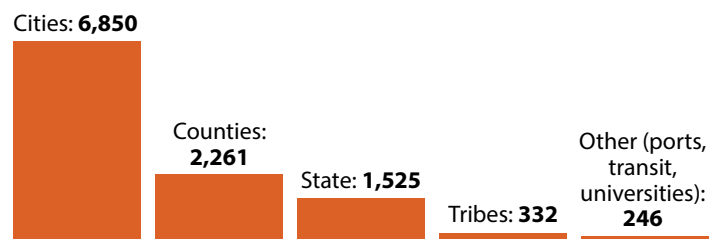
- **Assist with transporting** a person under the Involuntary Treatment Act.

**2. A resolution to a conflict in law:** Currently, there is a mandatory requirement in RCW 10.99.030 that officers arrest the aggressor involved in a domestic violence incident. However, a new 2021 law prevents officers from engaging in a vehicular pursuit unless the underlying offense is a violent or sex offense. If a person flees a location prior to arrest, law enforcement is currently prohibited from pursuing them.

**3. Investments in the future:** Washington is facing historic vacancies in law enforcement. This requires a historic investment in the Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) to hire and provide timely training of new officers. Enhanced training investments would also increase diversity in law enforcement.

## 179 cities employ 61% of all law enforcement

*Number of law enforcement by jurisdiction*



Source: 2020 CJIS Statistics and Reports

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