

WISCONSIN PROFESSIONAL POLICE ASSOCIATION

Law Enforcement Employee Relations Division • Supervisory Officers Relations Division • Civilian Employees Relations Division

July 14, 2022

Madison Common Council
Madison Public Safety Review Committee

Dear Honorable Alders and Members,

As the Executive Director for the Wisconsin Professional Police Association (WPPA), I write to respectfully express the WPPA's concerns regarding a proposal to create Section 5.17 of the Madison General Ordinances to prohibit the Madison Police Department (MPD) from utilizing certain crowd control munitions. Under the proposed ordinance, this prohibition would extend to law enforcement agencies responding to requests to provide assistance to the City of Madison and its residents.

Representing more than 11,000 members from over 300 local association affiliates, the WPPA is our state's largest law enforcement group. Established in 1932, the WPPA's mission is to protect and promote public safety, as well as the interests of the dedicated men and women that serve to provide it. On both fronts, the WPPA has serious concerns about the efficacy of this proposed ordinance, as well as the public safety implications for the community and its officers.

Crowd control munitions such as tear gas, mace, or impact projectile devices should undoubtedly serve a narrow purpose. With respect to tear gas, for instance, the 2021 [Madison Police Department Sentinel Event Review of the Department's Responses to the 2020 Protests of Police](#), the Quattrone Center recommended allowing MPD to use tear gas "cautiously...when people are at risk of imminent physical harm or to prevent substantial property damage." The WPPA agrees with this proposition. In fact, the best evidence available would indicate that MPD has adhered to this philosophy as well. Based upon the only assessments conducted regarding the use of crowd control munitions in Madison over the last 30 years, the police department has resorted to them infrequently at best.

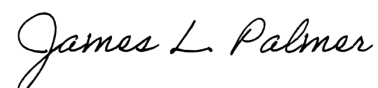
We fully appreciate that the use of crowd control munitions of the type contemplated in this proposed ordinance can undoubtedly cause injury and controversy, and we respect the public's right to scrutinize their deployment. Nonetheless, death and serious harm associated with the use of crowd control munitions is rare. Instead, the use of less-lethal alternatives and tactics have consistently been found to deescalate physical confrontations that are otherwise likely to injure law enforcement officers and civilians alike. Drastically impairing MPD's ability to resort to de-escalation tools – especially when it has done so on a very limited basis – would be a regressive policy change that would only serve to compromise the safety of the community and the police. Furthermore, it would likely undermine the city's ability to rely upon the mutual aid of its neighbors who are unlikely to risk these serious public safety implications.

For the foregoing reasons, the WPPA respectfully requests that you reconsider moving the above-referenced resolution forward, and instead pursue ways to provide MPD with the resources needed to deescalate legitimate public safety threats and strengthen its relationships with the community so that it can avoid these confrontations altogether.

Thank you in advance for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Respectfully,

WISCONSIN PROFESSIONAL POLICE ASSOCIATION



James L. Palmer, II
Executive Director