

February 13, 2023

Public Comment for House Bill 2 – Judicial Branch, Law Enforcement, & Justice

Montana Highway Patrol Budget

➤ “Committee Members,

My name is Quint Nyman and I am the Deputy Executive Director of the Montana Federation of the Public Employees. MFPE and one of its predecessor unions has been the exclusive representative of troopers at the Montana Highway Patrol for wages, benefits and working conditions since the mid- 1970s. We have made great strides in terms of wages and retention for troopers, especially since the passage of HB 35 in 2005 and again last session when 'cities' were added into the survey which is conducted by the Department of Administration.

However, the survey is only as good as the information obtained by DOA in the spring of each even year. By no means is this submission a slight towards DOA and the staff who conduct this survey. There is no mandatory requirement in MCA 2-18-30 5(a) for the listed cities and counties to respond to DOA with the requested pay and benefits information. In the most recent survey conducted there is both missing information and inaccurate information which resulted in, what we believe, is a lower percentage increase. For example, the Billings Police Department information submitted for the survey was not the current contract and resulted in significantly lower pay scales than the information what would have been current when it was submitted in the spring of 2022. In that example, there is almost a \$5,500 annual salary difference between the information submitted and the information that would have been accurate for the survey.

The result of inaccurate information collected and the lack of information collected has resulted in a 6.1% increase submitted to the budget. In reality, and with as much accurate information as possible, that percentage increase should be closer to an 11% submission to the budget for approval. MFPE has submitted, what we believe is the accurate information to DOA and urge the committee to request a reevaluation of the information in order to come to the appropriate increase request to add to the budget.

I would be happy to provide any information and further clarify. Thank you”

-Quint Nyman