

Subject: changes to police pursuit policy

Good morning, Alderman Spiker,

I understand that when the Common Council meets on June 23rd to discuss the changes to police pursuit policy that no public testimony will be accepted. But I wonder if you and others of the Council might consider the following testimony from me? I will include it here and whether or not it would be accepted, is up to you and the Council. Thank you.

--I am Patty Jerving, mother of fallen MKE Police Officer Peter Jerving, EOW Feb 7, 2023. You all have gotten emails from me on numerous occasions, and I have always appreciated your responses. Though all of us don't always agree on some issues, I do feel that you hear me. Thank you.

As a member of Enough is Enough I want to address the changes to police policy for vehicle pursuits being considered. I live in Police District 4, the district where my son Peter worked. Since joining Enough is Enough, I have read police criminal complaints for reckless driving. According to the statute: 972.14(3) which states that anyone is allowed to submit a statement to the court before sentence is pronounced, I write up community impact statements for the reckless driving that occurs in my neighborhood. Since August 2024, I have written an average of 7 impact statements PER WEEK for reckless driving that happens just 10 minutes away from my own door. Because of the closeness of this danger, I feel threatened by these drivers. I could be out on those streets, or it could be my house and property that they crash into when their reckless driving ends.

No one argues over the fact that reckless driving has only increased in the city of Milwaukee. But some people want to blame law enforcement for the injuries and deaths that reckless driving causes. But it is not police officers who force drivers to break the speed limit laws. The men and women of the Milwaukee Police Force only want to protect innocent people who don't break the law. It is drivers going way over the speed limit that are to be blamed. These drivers have reasons that they don't stop for the police, but they continue to speed away from mere traffic stops. Putting hinderances on the police from pursuing reckless drivers will not stop people from being harmed. It isn't police squad cars that are smashing into innocent drivers or pedestrians. It is the speeders who don't want to be held accountable for their crimes.

If one says it is the fault of the police who pursues a driver because that driver MIGHT NOT drive faster if cops don't chase them, that is blaming law enforcement. It isn't the cops who cause a driver to go faster; it is the fact that the criminal doesn't want to pay the penalty for breaking the law.

If you stop police officers from going after reckless drivers, these reckless drivers will only become emboldened. This will cause more people to be injured or killed because these drivers will think that no one can stop them. And no one will, so the epidemic will continue.

The burden of criminality should never be placed on the police force. That charge belongs squarely on the shoulders of the criminal. It is long past time to reduce that weight on law enforcement. If the courts handed down harsher penalties for reckless driving, this might affect the amount of such driving on the streets of Milwaukee.

Lawmakers should always remember who our justice system is supposed to protect first: law-abiding citizens and victims of crime.

Thank you. Sincerely, Patty Jerving, mother of fallen MKE P.O. Peter Jerving, EOW 02/07/23