



MEMO

TO: Members, House Government Operations Committee
FROM: Karen Horn, Director, Public Policy & Advocacy
RE: Executive Order 01-21 Creating the Agency of Public Safety
DATE: February 1, 2021

I am writing to the committee on behalf of the 246 member cities and towns of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT). Municipal officials have been involved in many studies over the past decades that consider how to modernize public safety governance and delivery in Vermont. As you know, there are many ways in which public safety services are delivered to municipalities and their residents. We appreciate the committee again taking up this long-standing discussion.

The VLCT Board of Directors strongly endorses the Department of Public Safety’s strategy for public safety modernization, which was presented to your committee on January 26, and Executive Order 01-21, which would finally create a unified approach to public safety and law enforcement through a new Agency of Public Safety. Last November, the VLCT Board voted unanimously to support the proposal to move the Vermont Police Academy to the Department of Public Safety. At their January 2021 meeting, the board went further and expressed strong support for the executive order creating the agency, which would provide municipal law enforcement agencies greater access to administrative and technical support, information technology, and expertise. Establishment of the agency would also provide greater opportunity for collaboration and innovation between state and local agencies, which is important since both have the same goal of modernizing public safety services statewide.

EO-01-21 creates the Agency of Public Safety, effective April 15, 2021. The executive order cites the Department of Public Safety’s ten-point strategy to accelerate progress in the organization of state law enforcement operations, modernize data collection, expand crisis response, enhance development of model policies, develop community oversight models, and address training and dispatch. The new agency, headed by a secretary and deputy secretary, would include a Department of Fire Safety and Emergency Management, a Department of Law Enforcement, and a Division of Support Safety. The Criminal Justice Council, Motor Vehicle Enforcement Division, and the Vermont Enhanced 911 Board would be added on July 1, 2021.

We would welcome the opportunity to testify in support of EO 01-21 or to suggest local officials to testify to your committee.