

TESTIMONY OF CRAIG STEDMAN
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Pennsylvania State Police Lancaster Potential Closings/Changes

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Thank you very much for the invitation to testify on the potential changes at Troop J, Lancaster.

Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Craig Stedman and I am the District Attorney of Lancaster County. I have been the District Attorney since 2008 and a prosecutor since I graduated from law school in 1991. I have dedicated my career to public safety and welcome the opportunity this morning to share my perspective on how some potential changes with the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) in Lancaster County would influence law enforcement and public safety in the county.

I want to preface my comments with a few remarks. First of all, I can certainly appreciate and support the need for the state to examine the state police and consider all options for potential cost savings. Also, other than the fact that I understand the patrol division will not be relocated, I want to emphasize that I have no idea what specific plan exists for PSP in this county or if such a plan even it exists. Instead, I want to focus on the consequences should some of PSP be moved out of the county.

Lancaster County has a population of 519,000, which is an increase of about 50,000 from the last census. The county is expected to continue to grow in population. We typically prosecute around 8,000 adult and juvenile criminal cases a year. In addition to patrol, the state police in Lancaster currently consist of eleven (11) assigned to criminal investigations, four (4) assigned to vice, two (2) fire marshals, and one (1) member of the crash team (CARS) unit. The past two years, the state police in Lancaster investigated approximately 3,500 offenses not including natural deaths, suicides, missing persons, assists to local departments, and traffic accidents. I would estimate that at least one half of those cases require the services of a criminal investigator and/or the vice unit. In addition, the fire marshals average about 140-150 fire investigations a year.

Any plan which might include moving the criminal investigators and vice unit, along with their immediate supervisors, out of Lancaster County would have a serious, tangible and detrimental impact on public safety in this county. Such a move would soon virtually eliminate state police drug investigations in this county and deal a massive blow to criminal investigations here.

Drug crimes and serious crimes will not vanish simply if these units are moved to another county. In fact, I have little doubt that drug dealers would take note of the void in the south and east of Lancaster County. I would expect there would be an increase in actual drug and drug related crimes and all the inherent adverse consequences to the public and yet a drop in arrests directly related to the move. Proximity is critical to the success of the vice unit. Vice agents quite simply need to be in close proximity to their informants. Further, the supervisor cannot effectively supervise a drug investigation in the southern part of the county from Berks County.

Drug users or small level dealers who are arrested often provide information up their chain of distribution. If the unit is moved to another county, those arrests will take place in that other county and it will trigger investigations up the drug chain in that other county rather than Lancaster. In addition, we have an excellent working relationship between our county drug task force, my office and PSP Vice. These relationships have led to multiple collaborative arrests which have made this county safer. Despite any and all good intentions, these same relationships will be strained and then mostly broken should the vice unit be moved. To put it more simply, you work where you are.

Similar to the vice unit, and in order to preserve public safety, the criminal investigative unit and immediate supervisors simply must be retained in Lancaster. Not only do the investigators handle a number of the criminal cases in the county, their success is directly related to their proximity and the relationships they have forged with this office and municipal departments. Many serious cases are solved because PSP investigators work with local departments. There would be no way to maintain those relationships if they are moved out of the county. Of course there would also be delayed responses which would adversely impact the case as well as victims and witnesses. The sooner law enforcement can respond the better chance we have to solve a case.

Similar to the vice unit, investigators obtain information from the people they arrest as well as concerned citizens. This information stream will without question shift to the county the investigators are moved to and Lancaster will suffer the consequences. In addition, witnesses and suspects sometimes agree to meet at the barracks to be interviewed. This is convenient for all parties and sometimes a strategic advantage to the investigator in that it is often more likely to lead to more information. I would presume that few people would agree to drive to Berks County to be interviewed which would in turn result in the need for PSP to commit more time and resources.

I cannot stress enough just how misguided it would be to move the criminal investigators out of this county. My main concern is that the boots on the ground when it comes to criminal investigations stay on the ground in Lancaster County. As a side comment, because the Lancaster Barracks will remain open, I am not sure how such a move makes sense even on a purely financial level let alone the cost to public safety.

The number of cases and work here calls for the retention of the fire marshals and the CARS investigator in Lancaster. Further, there will be undesirable delays in response times if they are moved to another county. However, unlike the case with the investigators and the vice unit, I cannot say that moving these individuals out of Lancaster will result in a massive blow to law enforcement. These individuals are experts who rely on the scene and tangible evidence rather than witnesses, informants and developing long term investigations. Thus, whereas a transfer is far from ideal, I do believe these individuals can still provide the core of their services from a nearby county if such a move somehow makes sense for other reasons on a state level.

Similar to the above, I cannot say that a move of the upper command at the Lancaster Barracks would impact the day to day operations in the county. I readily admit I am not in the best position to determine if such a move is prudent in the long run. However, I am concerned that such a move would eventually lead to Lancaster losing other resources and the support the remaining units would have.

Based on all of the above, I strongly support sensible realignment of the state police. However, any plan which might include moving the criminal investigators, the vice unit, and their immediate supervisors out of this county would be misguided and the result would without question be that law enforcement would suffer and the public would be less safe.

Once again, I want to thank the committee for the work you do, the invitation to appear today, and opportunity to speak to you this morning.