

United States Senate

December 9, 2021

The Honorable Eric J. Holcomb
Office of the Governor
Statehouse
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2797

Governor Holcomb,

I write in regard to the state of public safety in central Indiana and the effects that it is having on law enforcement and the community at large. I appreciate your attention to this critical matter.

I would like to commend you and the state legislature on enacting into law a common sense approach to police reform that encompassed both law enforcement and community stakeholder concerns through House Enrolled Act 1006 in the 2021 legislative session. As I have traveled the state and listened to law enforcement and community concerns, I have heard nothing but positive reactions to this measure. When I am in Washington, D.C., I am able to share with national stakeholders how Indiana is a state that pulls different groups to the table and finds common sense solutions to current issues. Thank you for your engagement and support of those efforts.

Unfortunately, Indianapolis—like many large metropolitan cities in America—has continued to see a rise in violent crime. In November the city broke last year's record of homicides which had broken 2018's previous record by more than 50 deaths. There have now been nearly 250 homicides in the city this year. Last week, two Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) officers were targeted, lured, and eventually stabbed by an individual who has been reported to have told investigators that his goal was to kill a police officer and die at the hands of another.

What may be most egregious in the rising violence is the ambivalence by local decision makers to the trend of violent crimes at the hands of perpetrators who are out on bail through the actions of The Bail Project. This non-profit entity directly posts bail for individuals but is able to skirt the traditional rules and regulations of bail agents that include responsibility for post-bail behavior and ensuring that these individuals attend court hearings. While there continues to be significant local reporting of The Bail Project's involvement in the release of multiple individuals who have gone on to re-commit violent crimes, there has been little response by city-county officials in the way of oversight of this organization which has been a recipient of \$150,000 of city grant funding, ironically, through the Violent Crime Prevention Grant Program administered by the Central Indiana Community Foundation.

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In a phone call last week with Mr. Rick Snyder, President of the Indianapolis Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), I heard directly the desperation of our law enforcement community for needed changes to the environment in central Indiana. I acknowledged that many of the proposed policy changes that Mr. Snyder is seeking are state level issues, but nonetheless believe it is important to pass my support for addressing those issues to you and legislative leadership. Having been a part of our state government as a member of the legislature and watching it closely as the State's representative to Congress for the last three years, I know the legislature can act swiftly and effectively when legislative leaders and the Governor prioritize an issue. I ask you to prioritize these issues in the upcoming session of the Indiana General Assembly and urge your legislative colleagues to do the same for the sake of law enforcement and the greater central Indiana community.

I also wanted to update you on my work in Congress and make myself and my team available to you should you think we can be any assistance at the state level. Specifically as it relates to the targeting of Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department officers, I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of the *Back the Blue Act*, S. 1599, which among other things would expand the list of statutory aggravating factors in death penalty determinations to also include the killing or attempted killing of a law enforcement officer. My team and I are also looking at every possible avenue to curb federal funds from making their way to non-profit entities acting as bail agents who are able to avoid the rules and regulations that provide accountability for recipients of charity bail. In a release this year, the Indianapolis Office of Public Health and Safety acknowledged that over \$150 million in federal funding would go towards violence reduction programming. I firmly believe Congress's oversight authority should be utilized to ensure that money is not used to support organizations that are able to operate outside traditional rules and regulations that apply to the bail industry. My team and I are working on legislative language that would address this issue.

In closing, thank you for your continued partnership on these and other issues. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Mike Braun

CC: Speaker Todd Huston
President Pro Tem Rod Bray
Rick Snyder, President Indianapolis Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #86