



Office of the
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JOE LEKO, SHERIFF
DANIEL BIANCONI, CHIEF DEPUTY SHERIFF

1580 Highway 55
Hastings, MN 55033

March 24, 2025

Dear Members of the Minnesota Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed legislation that would allocate funding for active hearing protection for law enforcement officers across the state. As the Sheriff of Dakota County, and 28 years of law enforcement experience, I have witnessed firsthand the critical need for this protective equipment in ensuring our officers' long-term health and operational effectiveness.

Law enforcement officers are routinely exposed to high-decibel sounds, including firearm discharges, sirens, and other loud noises inherent to the job. Prolonged and repeated exposure to such sounds without adequate protection can lead to irreversible hearing damage, which not only impacts the well-being of officers but also increases costs related to workers' compensation and disability claims. Active hearing protection devices balance safeguarding hearing and maintaining situational awareness. These devices amplify low-level sounds, allowing officers to communicate effectively while protecting them from harmful noise levels. Implementing this technology would enhance officer safety, improve operational performance, and contribute to the overall effectiveness of law enforcement agencies throughout Minnesota.

Funding for this initiative is not just an investment in officer health—it is an investment in public safety. Officers with compromised hearing may struggle to process critical auditory cues during high-stress situations, potentially impacting their ability to make split-second, life-saving decisions. Equipping law enforcement with active hearing protection can help prevent long-term health issues while ensuring they remain at peak readiness to serve and protect our communities.

I urge you to support this legislation and prioritize those who put their lives on the line daily. Protecting our officers from preventable hearing loss is a matter of occupational safety and a step toward more effective and sustainable policing.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your support on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Joe Leko
Dakota County Sheriff