

**Statement of Hampshire County Sheriff Patrick J. Cahillane  
to the Special Commission on Correctional Consolidation and Collaboration**

**May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

In the last 12 years, we have had five special commissions focused on the Sheriffs:

- In 2013, the Senate launched the “Special Commission Relative to the Reorganization or Consolidation of Sheriffs’ Offices.” That study ended with no action taken.
- In 2016, the Executive Office of Administration and Finance hired Public Consulting Group to conduct a Sheriffs’ Funding Formula study, a study that showed chronic underfunding of some offices, my office included, yet no corrective legislative measures were taken.
- Then, in 2018, the CARES Act and the Criminal Justice Reform Act were signed into law, each containing items that can only be described as unfunded mandates, yet sheriffs across the state complied despite the lack of funding.
- Those significant laws were then followed by the Legislature’s Special Commission on Correctional Funding, the 101 Commission, which conducted its work in 2021 and 2022. The recommendations of that study commission have yet to be thoroughly debated, but led to the present commission.

- Here we are in 2025 with yet another consolidation study commission, one virtually identical in name and charge to the ones conducted in 2013 and 2021.

Of the five studies undertaken since 2013 that have focused almost exclusively on the sheriffs, there has not been a single commission focused on crime reduction. Eliminating or reducing the corrections footprint will not reduce crime. And where is the judiciary, the officials who sentence people to county jail? They should be at the table.

As quoted in the Massachusetts Corrections 2025 newsletter, the commission includes nine voting members who bring general experience and skills, but do not have a direct stake in the outcome of the commission. It also includes 11 non-voting members who represent stakeholders in the conversation.

It strikes me as odd that a commission touting collaboration would deny the Sheriffs – stakeholders who are answerable directly to the people – a vote on the recommendations ultimately approved by this commission. Let's not forget that the Sheriff is an elected office, constitutionally equal to that of legislators.

The question before us should not be "Have the Sheriffs earned their keep." The question should be "How do we support the Sheriffs' mission." These hearings so far have proven that we have earned our keep, and will continue to do so. The question now should be "How do we tap into everyone's expertise to reduce crime."

Reducing crime ... that surely is the goal of a civilized society and should be part of this commission's goal. Eliminating sheriffs' offices will not reduce crime. But it will reduce the tools at our disposal to prevent crime in our local communities.

This commission should focus on crime reduction through collaboration with all the agencies on this committee.

Reducing crime should be the goal, and you will have no better partner than the Sheriffs because we stand on the front line engaging with the individuals who commit crimes and also with many of the victims. We also stand with the residents of our communities, and proudly uphold our vow to help keep them safe.

Many of us remember the dismantling of the Massachusetts State Hospital system by legislative action more than 30 years ago, and the societal turmoil that ensued. If the goal of this commission is simply to eliminate an agency or two, and then say we've saved a few million dollars and declare some sort of success, without providing a clear, thoroughly and publicly debated alternative plan that demonstrably reduces crime and victimization, and serves county jail populations better than the Sheriffs do now, then we will have not fulfilled our Constitutional duties to the citizens of the Commonwealth in our role in protecting and keeping society safe.