

PA SENATE HEARING  
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JUDICIARY  
LAW AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE  
“Ensuring Accountability and Senate Chamber Equality  
In Law Enforcement and the Criminal Justice System”

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My name is Eric Porterfield. I am the CEO of ERTCA – the Emergency Response Training and Certification Association.

Before I discuss ERTCA, I want to give you a little background. In 1994, thanks to a Ben Franklin Technology Center Grant, I co-founded Distance Learning Network – a satellite-based continuing medical education company focusing on mental health related issues.

DLN’s first program in 1997 had a total of seventeen viewers. Seven years later, our average weekly program viewership was nearly 45,000 doctors, nurses and therapists, located in all 50 states, making us the largest continuing medical education company in North America. DLN was one of the Ben Franklin Technology Grant program’s largest paybacks in history, underscoring the power of continuing education.

Fast forward fifteen years. In 2017, I started looking for the next opportunity to train large numbers of professionals and volunteers entrusted to serve public safety and health. In the Spring of 2019, I was introduced to Chief Scott Henry and his creation -- the Mansfield University Public Safety Training Institute – known as MUPSTI.

What I found was not only a phenomenal police training program, but startling similarities between medical education and law enforcement education. But there were differences, glaring differences that caught my attention: specifically in the areas of oversight, standardization and data outcomes.

In the CME world there was federal and state oversight, standardization of training and protocols and data driven outcomes that guided the quality and purpose of continuing medical education.

Law enforcement continuing education, it turns out, is absent all three.

So in August of 2019, ERTCA and MUPSTI set to work changing that. Scott Henry, Tioga County Commissioner Erick Coolidge and I began an aggressive effort to create a coalition of people and organizations vested in the issue of police culture and training. The result: Today more than twenty-five ERTCA members and partners including The Diversity Council in Minneapolis, Community Navigators in Wilmington, DE, Pennsylvania Campus Police Officer Alliance, VETFORCE, the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers, the PA Chiefs of Police Association, Survival Mindset, the PA School Board Association, 911.Training, Penn State Innovation Park and others have come together in a collaborative fashion to discuss how ERTCA can create and distribute education and training programs to five principle areas of police officer training over the next four years:

1. Emergency Response in Rural and Disenfranchised Communities
2. Police Culture
3. Community Policing
4. Mental Health's Impact on Policing Procedures
5. Emergency Communications & NG911 Challenges

These aren't "end of the rainbow" discussions. And they are certainly not all of the discussions we focus on, but we have made them our focus for now.

As part of our discussions, our association and coalition quickly established that we are better together because we do not have time to reinvent the wheels of justice. New legislation is not on our radar. Rather, we have made it our goal to first address deficiencies in police training and replace antiquated ideas and practices with well-informed, cross-cultural and multi-jurisdictional voices from every walk of life and every type of community.

As Senator Baker stated so perfectly earlier this week, "We need to have a constructive conversation about finding a balance in community policing and community relations so that we stop the corrosive racial divide that diminishes the value and scope of freedom for everyone."

But it doesn't end there. Racism cannot be a catchall for the problems or solutions to our police deficiencies or new training. The data is telling us our police need more than just more or better rules. It is telling us we need to pay much closer attention to data – facts – so that our conversations and new training programs and protocols are first well informed by those facts and not by opinions, emotions and fear.

On behalf of ERTCA members and partners, I am here with some very good news in a very challenging time: In Pennsylvania, the conversation started *before* George Floyd's tragic death. ERTCA and its members started talking last fall about police reforms and training and is ready to share our progress and work alongside state and local law enforcement to not only keep the conversation going, but to improve both the cadet and the 40-year veteran's understanding of a job that entrusts them to protect and serve with human dignity and understanding as the core value.

In medicine, the Hippocratic Oath requires every doctor to practice medicine based on a set of solemn declarations, including, “I will remember that I remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings, those sound of mind and body as well as the infirm.”

ERTCA works under the assumption that someday soon the oath to Protect and Serve might also allude to, “...with special obligations to all my fellow human beings...” and be as honored an oath as any law enforcement officer might ever take.

Thank you for your time.