

**Testimony of  
Kenneth Cole, Governmental Consultant Services Inc.**

**Before the  
Michigan Senate Judiciary Committee**

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Chairman Jones ... Distinguished members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Good morning. My name is Kenneth Cole. I am a principal with the multi-client lobbying firm Governmental Consultant Services Incorporated (GCSI) and lead lobbyist for the City of Detroit at the Michigan Capitol.

Please know that Mayor Dave Bing and the honorable Detroit City Council send warm greetings and thank the committee for hearing – *and, hopefully, passing* – House Bill 4344.

Sponsored by Representative Tommy Stallworth, this legislation seeks to amend the Michigan Coalition on Law Enforcement Standards Act (***Public Act 203 of 1965***) – more commonly called MCOLES – by simply reducing to 600,000 from 750,000 the population threshold of a city where fire arson investigators can be deputized as police officers.

Only one municipality meets that criterion: The City of Detroit, which urgently requests passage of House Bill 4344 to help it combat the ubiquitous crime of arson within its borders. Data from the Detroit Fire Department substantiates the pervasiveness of this offense and, thus, the importance of this legislation to Michigan's largest city. In particular, note that ...

- Detroit, in 2012, had 5,226 fires, of which only 1,237 – or 24 percent – were actually prioritized for investigation due to staffing limitations resulting from budget cuts;
- Of the 1,237 fires that were investigated, 765 – or 62 percent – were deemed arson by fire arson investigators;
- Forty (40) people died in fires in Detroit in 2012 – 15 in blazes ruled arson; and ....

- Arson caused \$70 million worth of property damage in Detroit in 2012.

Again, arson is a *serious public-safety menace* in Detroit, which appealed to the Legislature nine years ago to allow the Chief of the Detroit Police Department to deputize fire arson investigators.

Attached to my testimony is an excerpt from the House Fiscal Agency analysis of that 2004 legislation, which was sponsored by the late state Representative William Van Regenmorter, a west Michigan Republican. It affirms that granting police powers to fire arson investigators streamlines and hastens their detective work, increasing the probability that perpetrators of this heinous crime will be brought to justice.

That said ... it's also important to note that Detroit, in 2004, employed 24 fire arson investigators. **Today, that number is 9**, a decrease spawning from persistent cuts in budgetary support. **For perspective, consider that Michigan's discretionary revenue sharing appropriation to Detroit in the current 2013 fiscal year is 42 percent less than in FY 2004.**

Lastly, I'd be remiss if I did not mention that Detroit fire arson investigators have been especially successful at exposing auto insurance fraud, which is **arguably more culpable for high auto insurance premiums than the unlimited medical benefits that have been the focus of much legislative debate this session.** Indeed, roughly 1 in 4 of the aforementioned 1,237 fires investigated in 2012 involved a vehicle – many of which, curiously, were owned by residents of neighboring communities. Other urban centers undoubtedly have similar experiences.

This concludes my written remarks. Thank you, again, for considering a *Yes* vote on House Bill 4344. I appreciate your forbearance and am happy to entertain questions.