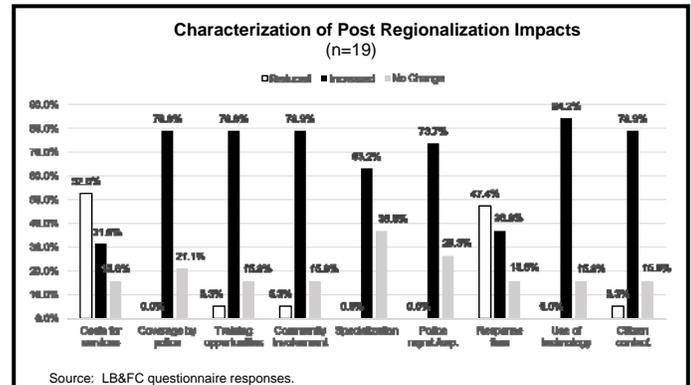


Police Consolidation in Pennsylvania Report Highlights

House Resolution 2013-168 directed the LB&FC to conduct a study concerning the consolidation or merger of municipal police departments (PD) in the Commonwealth.

- **Most (72%) municipal PDs have 10 or fewer full-time officers, the minimum number often cited for a stand-alone PD.** 54% have 5 or fewer full-time officers. In 2013, PA had 986 municipal PDs (both full- and part-time), 34 regional PDs (102 municipalities), 231 municipalities contracting with another municipality, and 13 municipalities contracting with a regional PD.
- **In 2012, PSP provided full-time services to about half (1,279) of PA's municipalities and part-time services to 420 municipalities at a cost of \$540M.** This represents 3.3M residents, covering 82% of PA's land area. Municipalities do not directly compensate the PSP for services.
- **Municipalities with 10 or fewer officers cite loss of control as the top reason for not pursuing a regional PD.** Cost, cost allocation, and pension issues were also cited as difficult to address. Most municipalities (85%) without a PD cite cost as the most significant reason for not having a PD.
- **Regional PDs cite loss of control as the most difficult issue to address when forming a regional PD.** Other difficult factors include developing the inter-municipal police contract, union contract issues, and distribution of costs.
- **Studies find that regional PDs cost approximately 25% less than the stand-alone PDs.** A 2006 study of the West Hills Regional PD found it cost 25.23% less than the aggregate of the four "model" municipalities with their own PDs. Studies in 1997 and 1989 reported similar results.
- **Municipalities that join a regional PD to save costs may be disappointed.** For the period 2000 through 2011, cost increases for municipalities participating in a regional PD tended to be somewhat higher than for municipalities with their own PDs. Data municipalities report to DCED may not, however, include all cost associated with operating their own PDs. Also, regional PDs appear to provide a higher level of service, which may justify the costs.
- **Regional PDs offer many benefits, but may result in increased costs particularly in the initial years.** Regional PDs noted improvements in

police coverage, training opportunities, and cost reductions over the long-term; though short-term costs increase.



- **Municipalities should consider size, demographics, and approach to policing when considering forming a regional PD.** Local officials and residents' support is also a key factor.
- **A statute defining a regional PD and establishing certain requirements may encourage municipalities to consider consolidation.** The Local Government Code authorizes consolidations but does not provide a legal definition for a regional PD. In 2006, the PA State Planning Board recommended a regional PD act to provide a clearer path for creating regional PDs and to fund initial start-up costs.

Recommendations:

- The General Assembly should (1) consider defining certain aspects of a regional PD in statute; (2) distribute additional funds to the regional PDs to reduce costs and encourage their use; and, (3) amend Act 600 to allow regional PDs to use other pension requirements when a third class city is part of a regional PD.
- DCED's CLGS should (1) encourage municipalities to report the full costs of their police services; (2) review the Dauphin County regionalization study (when completed) for possible statutory restrictions that impede the desired approach for police services; and (3) identify best practices for regional PDs to assist municipalities that are forming a regional PD.