



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: December 20, 2019

Contact: Kenya Parker

608-266-5813

Representative LaKeshia Myers Introduces Legislation Punishing Unlawful Summoning of a Police Officer

MADISON – Representative LaKeshia Myers (D-Milwaukee) introduced legislation today that would make it a crime to unlawfully summon a law enforcement officer. This bill would charge an individual with a Class C misdemeanor if they cause a law enforcement officer to arrive at a location for a reason other than suspected criminal activity should the other person pose no risk of danger or threat of personal property.

Nicknamed the “BBQ Becky Bill”, the legislation aims to curb frivolous calls to law enforcement, which are seen as a public nuisance and waste of taxpayer resources. The moniker references a 2018 incident involving a California woman who called police on a family having a picnic in a local park. The woman, Jennifer Schulte, called police because the family used a charcoal grill, and not a gas grill to barbeque. The family was subsequently detained for an hour before police decided not to issue a citation.

“Public safety officers are a resource that we must use wisely; when officers are frivolously contacted, this diverts time and resources that could be used to solve and deter actual crime. We must ensure that individuals who utilize 9-1-1 and call the police are doing so for actual emergencies. Attaching a misdemeanor to the abuse of these services reinforces to the public that we take public safety and the safety of our residents seriously” Representative Myers said.

Myers stated that she was inspired to introduce the legislation after hearing the story of Oregon State Representative Janelle Bynum, an African American legislator, who had the police called on her while she was campaigning in her district. This was also compounded by other incidences like that involving a child who was harassed for selling water without a permit and a CVS cashier who called the police because he believed a customer’s coupon was counterfeit.

“Just this week, a Waukesha woman called police because she was angry about her chicken sandwich from KFC! This is the type of absurdity that this bill aims to combat. There must be a penalty for people who misuse police services. There has to be a degree of responsibility when you contact the police; there needs to be a valid reason. Doing so flippantly can cause undue harm, danger, and stress to individuals involved. In order to ensure our police officers are able to respond to real crimes, individuals who unlawfully contact law enforcement must be held accountable and prosecuted for abusing public resources. Local municipalities cannot afford to waste valuable police resources on imprudent irrationality”, said Representative Myers.

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