



March 17, 2025

Minnesota Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee

Subject: Written Testimony Opposing HF 1686 – Online Training Ban

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Russell Willmon, and I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding HF 1686. I am a Certified Protection Professional (CPP) through ASIS International and formerly served as Chairman of the Utah State Security Licensing Board. Before founding Defencify Training, I spent nearly a decade as a General Manager for Securitas Security Services, providing protective security services and overseeing the training and development of security officers.

Defencify Training is a nationally recognized provider of online security officer training. Our courses are state-approved for both new and renewal guard license training in over 10 states, and each month, we train more than 4,000 security officers through our online platform. Our training programs exceed regulatory standards nationwide, ensuring that security officers receive high-quality, interactive, and fully auditable training that prepares them for real-world challenges.

As a trusted training provider, we fully support raising security officer training standards. However, I strongly oppose the outright ban on online training in HF 1686. Removing online training is a step backward that will:

- Increase costs for businesses, security officers, and the clients who rely on security services.
- Limit accessibility, creating a barrier to entry for much needed security talent, and making it harder for security officers to complete required training.
- Eliminate a proven, trackable, and compliant training method that ensures consistency and a highly effective level of education delivery.

Online Training is a Cost-Effective and Proven Solution

The proposed ban ignores the economic realities faced by security companies, their clients, and the officers themselves:

- For security businesses – Online training allows companies to reduce costs by eliminating travel, instructor fees, and scheduling issues. It also expands the pool of potential security officers who cannot commit to 100% in-person training.
- For their customers – Businesses relying on security services will see costs rise if companies must pay for additional in-person training expenses.
- For security officers – Many officers work unpredictable shifts or multiple jobs and take care of families. Requiring them to travel to a training facility adds unnecessary costs in time, transportation, and lost wages.

At Defencify, we invest in training development as a capital expense, allowing us to offer high-quality training at no additional per-training cost, keeping training affordable for everyone.



Online Training Works—When Done Right

I understand concerns about ineffective online courses, but the solution is to regulate online training—not eliminate it.

- High-quality e-learning is interactive, requiring students to engage—not just watch videos.
- Effective courses are scenario-based, preparing officers for real-world situations.
- Good online training prevents fast-forwarding and requires active participation through simulations, quizzes, assessments, and knowledge checks.
- It is gamified.
- Every second of training is tracked and auditable, ensuring full compliance and accountability.

Minnesota has already demonstrated strong oversight in reviewing and approving online training programs. When I first submitted Defencify's courses for approval, Minnesota was the only state where an analyst reviewed my courses multiple times before board approval. That level of scrutiny should be applied across all providers, not replaced with a ban.

At Defencify, we follow these gold-standard e-learning principles, backed by our own Dr. Anneke Garcia, who holds a Ph.D. in Adult Learning and Instructional Design.

Security Officers Need Flexibility to Learn Effectively

Security officers have demanding schedules, and forcing them into a rigid classroom model creates unnecessary obstacles.

Personally, as someone with ADHD and dyslexia, I know firsthand that sitting through an 8-hour lecture is not always effective. Many learners retain information better when they can train at their own pace, review material, and reinforce key concepts—something that online learning uniquely allows.

HF 1686 removes that choice, making it harder for officers to complete their training while balancing real-world responsibilities.

A Better Solution: Regulate, Don't Ban

Instead of banning online training, Minnesota should:

- ✓ Adopt e-learning quality standards, ensuring courses are engaging, interactive, and properly structured.
- ✓ Require tracking and compliance measures, ensuring students fully complete training.
- ✓ Allow a hybrid model, where knowledge-based training is completed online, and hands-on skills are taught in person if necessary.

HF 1686 takes the wrong approach to improving training. Instead of banning online learning, Minnesota should lead the way in modernizing security training standards—ensuring that online courses meet quality, accountability, and accessibility requirements while keeping costs low for businesses and officers.



I urge the committee to reject HF 1686 unless online training is preserved with structured quality standards.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russell Willmon".

Russell Willmon, CPP
Founder & CEO, Defencify Training