

July 17, 2020

Testimony in Support of
LCO No. 3471 AN ACT CONCERNING POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY (AACPA)

My name is Abbie Winter and I am a concerned citizen from Easton. I am writing to support LCO #3471 An Act Concerning Police Accountability (AACPA), and to provide comment on the bill's need to address police unions, as well as include funding diversion from police departments towards community support structures.

I am scared because LMPD broke in and murdered defenseless and crimeless Breonna Taylor in her own home. I am terrified that these killers continue to live their lives business as usual, and continue to work as law enforcement officers. I am scared for Connecticut residents because, within our current policing system, this police misconduct and impunity can, and is, happening in our communities.

In Bridgeport during 2017, Jayson Negron, an unarmed child, was shot lethally and unapologetically by former officer James Boulay, who now continues to work in the station's administration. In Redding during 2014, Gugsu "Abe" Debela was found dead in an overturned vehicle with a gunshot wound in the back of his head. Redding Police Department rashly deemed the case a suicide and Abe's death has not been given a serious investigation. This past January in New Haven, Mubarak Souleman was lethally shot during a car chase turned violent, and his death could have been prevented with appropriate de-escalation and implicit bias training.

Committing a crime shouldn't mean you are killed.
Being a person of color shouldn't mean you are killed.

It may no longer be acceptable for citizens of color to receive disproportionate police brutality, and cases of this excessive force and violence may no longer receive deficient levels of concern. It may no longer be acceptable that police officers commit acts of violence without commensurate consequence.

I support AACPA's plan to demilitarize CT police and create support for whistleblowers so that internal voices of concern are not snuffed out. I support that the bill calls for the police force to be demilitarized by prohibiting the use of military equipment. I support that the feasibility of social workers responding to calls will be reviewed, as this inclusion of social work professionals has the power to deescalate situations and grant communities the support they need – I feel this initiative could have saved Mubarak Souleman's life.

I am providing comment to strengthen the bill's language regarding the feasibility studies for social workers' involvement with police calls in section 18. As it reads now, there is no commitment to include social workers in police call responses if the required evaluations deem their inclusion feasible and effective. I also am requesting the bill include more concrete plans on actively diverting funds from the law enforcement agencies, and directing these funds towards community support structures and efforts. Section 18 begins the conversation of increasing social

workers' involvement so that the number of cases police officers need to respond to will decrease. The bill needs to address that law enforcement agencies' budgets will decrease with demilitarization, as committed to in section 40, and that these funds need to be reallocated towards community support structures such as schools, hospitals, housing, and food accessibility efforts. These are all areas that increase safety, which should be any police department's first goal.

In conclusion, I support LCO No. 3471 An Act Concerning Police Accountability with the consideration of my aforementioned points of comment.