

Dear Judiciary Committee members,

My name is Abby Steckel and I am a Connecticut resident. I believe that Draft LCO #3471: An Act Concerning Police Accountability is not sufficient to ensure safety for Black and Brown communities. An effective police reform act should reduce the scope of police in Connecticut communities and invest in community empowerment. The following are some provisions that this act should include:

1. Correctional Reform: Provisions of the bill aimed at holding police accountable must extend to correctional officers. Just as policing disproportionately damages black and brown communities, prisons disproportionately lock up black and brown people.
2. Independent Oversight: The bill's draft language calls for the creation of an Inspector General appointed by the Chief State's Attorney. First, this is not independent oversight as prosecutors work closely with police officers and cannot be considered reliably independent. Second, the Inspector General would not be charged with monitoring and investigating correctional staff performance and institutional policy. The bill's draft language only covers correctional oversight when investigating a death in the Department of Correction (D.O.C) custody, an absolute bare minimum that should not be considered substantive oversight.
3. A Shift in Funding from Corrections to Communities: The bill's focus on demilitarization does not go far enough. The bill must explicitly shift funding from policing into communities of color. This includes investing in resources for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.
4. Ban routine practices that inflict long-term trauma: The bill's focus on banning practices that inflict unnecessary violence during police stops is warranted. Banning these practices is long overdue, but tactics such as chokeholds must also be banned in the DOC. Similarly, the bill should focus on banning solitary confinement, a torturous practice that inflicts life-long trauma. The bill must also ban the use of prone and in-cell restraints.
5. Qualified Immunity: The abolition of qualified immunity must be extended to correctional officers.

Please strengthen the draft legislation to take strong action to end the violence inflicted by police officers and the DOC.

Sincerely,  
Abby Steckel  
New Haven, CT