

July 17, 2020

Judicial Committee Hearing

Testimony from Abdul Osmanu

Senator Winfield, Representative Strafstrom, and Distinguished Members of the Judicial Committee:

My name is Abdul Osmanu and I am an 18-year-old Hamden resident writing in support of adding amendments to LCO #3471: An Act Concerning Police Accountability (AACPA). Over these past few weeks we've witnessed a movement far more potent and energized than anything any of us here today could've imagined. All across our state there have been protests, direct actions, and organizing all centered around tackling issues of police violence and accountability; whether it against police violence in Minneapolis and Louisville or the almost innumerable and ever-growing cases of police violence in our own state. With these calls for justice and accountability coming in the midst of a worldwide pandemic (that has preyed upon and exacerbated existing systemic inequities) and what many may call a revolution or revival of sorts comes the urgent need for in depth, carefully crafted policy that aims to affirm the voices of our community members and organizers putting it all on the line for a better tomorrow free of police violence. In spite of the oftentimes minute difference of opinions between members of this movement when it comes to the abolition vs. reform discourse, one uniting factor remains, the true burning desire to address police violence and accountability in a way that addresses the problem head on. This leads me to believe and hope that our elected officials, oftentimes blinded by the politicization of real-life issues, can be able to do the same and come up with stronger language (Sec. 33-35) that makes significant structural changes to policing in our state, changes that involve and empower community. In many ways the bill as it is does take certain steps towards holding officers accountable. Giving way for the creation of civilian review boards with subpoena powers,

requiring officers to display their badges, and ending Qualified Immunity for officers who violate Civil Rights are all steps in the right direction. However, in 2020, in the midst of all we collectively have witnessed, this bill does do enough to address what our communities have demanded and fought the past couple of weeks. In such a time and climate, we must aim to pass legislation that challenges the status quo that has kept us and led us to these times for far longer than any of us here today have been around. Anything less would be a grave failure to seize the moment and hold reckless officers as well as the entire institution of policing accountable. Allowing the police and state to continue to investigate themselves would be a grave failure. Allowing our state to continue to maintain and fatten our policing/DOC budget as our most vulnerable residents struggle to make ends meet and provide for themselves would be nothing but a grave failure. Continuing to give an institution based on “public service” the ability to move in such autonomy without checks on investigation and departmental practices by the very same communities they police would be a grave failure. The community deserves a considerably large role, in terms of numbers on task forces and councils, as our community members, those closest to the community understand the issues and can be held accountable much easier than anyone caught up in this tiring, overly bureaucratic system. Social Workers should be able to work entirely independent of Police Departments as adding social workers to mix would truly do nothing to quell toxic police culture that quite honestly breeds many instances of police brutality. We should do more than delve into the generally feel good reforms of mandatory implicit bias training, hiring more minority officers into a far more powerful institution systematically rife with decades, even centuries of rigid inequity, or even body cameras (need substantive policy/language on accountability to effect any real change) we’ve seen fail time and time again. We all must use this moment to as the opportunity

to value the voices of our community and create a CT none of us could imagine in our wildest dreams.