

Dear Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Ranking Members Kissel and Rebimbas, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

I commend you on acting to better the ways in which police officers are held accountable, especially those with a history of racial profiling, brutalizing, and murdering civilians. However, as a citizen and educator in the state of Connecticut, I believe it is also necessary for the state to divest in policing in order to redirect funds to essential services that benefit all our communities. Reinvesting in education, health care (including mental health services), affordable housing, and other social services and public goods are the foundation for strong communities where its citizens feel recognized, heard, and cared for, rather than monitored, bullied, and harrassed. The bill, as proposed, is a great start, but needs amendments before I would fully support it.

In sections 1-4 and 15, the current language grants police the authority to police themselves in the certification and decertification process. This language should be amended to create an independent body that does not have a conflict of interest to be in charge of this in order to ensure that the best candidates are put on our police forces and that cases of current conduct are viewed from an objective lens.

In sections 33-35, the current language does not go far enough. We do not need a new inspector general position to investigate police use of force and DOC custodial deaths, we again need an independent prosecutor in order to ensure objectivity and no bias. Also, there is substantial evidence showing that implicit bias training does not reduce police brutality or significantly change police behavior. Therefore, mandatory implicit bias training should not be included in this bill. The funds needed for these programs should be reinvested into our communities directly.

In section 18, the current language has police departments evaluating whether or not social workers would be useful or not to replace them for some work. Because police have a conflict of interest in making this call, the language should be amended so that an independent body determines this. Social workers would be more adequately trained to handle a variety of calls, including domestic violence, other forms of physical abuse, and mental health issues. This also would help release some of the work police officers have to carry out so that they could focus their efforts into other concerns of the community.

I would also like to point out that body-worn cameras *do not/cannot* reduce police violence and increase police accountability unless they are accompanied by adequate policies that provide real accountability for the police. Without proper policies in place, these devices can easily transform into tools of unnecessary surveillance on communities. To highlight this, "One 2016 study found that 92.6 percent of prosecutors' offices nationally in jurisdictions where police wear body cameras have used that footage as evidence against private citizens, while just 8.3 percent have used it to prosecute police officers" (Norwood, 2020). Also the purchase of technology without effective policies is a burden on taxpayers and diverts funds from other important programs that help communities thrive since these technologies are often expensive.

With this bill, sections 8, 9, 17, 30, 40, and 41 are great first steps toward greater police accountability. I support these sections without major changes. These sections illustrate how the citizens' government is on the right path to fully realizing what CT citizens want for their state. With the suggested changes above with the information highlighted in mind, the whole bill can adequately address what CT voters and citizens want to see for their state.

Thank you for your time,
Abigail Sullivan
4th grade teacher at Burns Latino Studies Academy in Hartford, CT