

To Whom It May Concern,

I have been a police officer in the state of CT for nearly seven years; I'm passionate about law enforcement and the ability to truly serve a community. Since being hired, I've had the blessing and the curse to see things that most people don't see in a lifetime, both good and bad. I've saved people's lives, watched people die as I tried to save them, laughed alongside my co-workers about ridiculous calls, and cried alongside my co-workers at police funerals. I've had victims find solace through embracing me in a hug and I've had people punch me, spit at me, call me a pig, and try to kill me.

I cannot tell you how many people I've helped, arrested, or otherwise encountered from countless different backgrounds who say something along the lines of, "you're definitely a good cop, man." If it sounds like I'm bragging, that's because I absolutely am; my biggest point of pride is the fact that when people talk about good and bad officers, I generally fall into the category of "one of the good guys" whether the person I'm dealing with is rich, poor, black, or white. Personally, it was never a question of what career was right. I would not trade a single day as a police officer for any job in the world regardless of money, prestige, or fame.

At least, that **was** the case. Before last month.

I'm embarrassed to admit that I loved the job so much, I sat quietly while policies and laws have been changed to further tie our hands over the past several years. However, I will no longer remain silent. This law, if passed as proposed, will be a crippling and deadly blow to law enforcement in this state.

I have no shame admitting that I'm **begging** for lawmakers to slow down, look around, and make effective changes that attack root of inequality instead of yet another blow to the easy scapegoat which, over the last several years, has been the police. Bill after bill about "police accountability" and "police transparency" with the same hackneyed, feel-good phrases is passed, and yet there is still supposedly a problem with the police? It's not that these bills aren't effective, it's that reform efforts aimed primarily at the police are misguided and aren't attacking the roots of inequality.

This bill hasn't passed yet and we're already seeing a spike in violent crime in New Haven. This comes one week after the police department's budget was slashed by millions of dollars. Make no mistake that the worst affected areas will be inner cities with the communities you are attempting to protect by passing this legislation. Homicide rates will rise, police will not respond effectively for fear of losing their homes in a civil lawsuit if they make the wrong split-second decision, and as a result the violent behavior will fester and many will die.

I wish I could take some of you into a police department's break room in Any Town, CT right now where the daily conversation is usually something along the lines of, "don't be a hero right now; it's not worth going to jail or being fired over the next viral video. Every encounter with the public has potential

to turn violent, so don't go looking for things or step in unless you absolutely must. It's not worth your job and potentially your freedom."

If this bill passes and **limits qualified immunity, expands criteria leading to police decertification, prevents police from asking for consent without probable cause, and creates even stricter limits on the supreme court ruled deadly force standards**, you can expect the resignation of countless of the "good" officers you're trying to save. That's because "good" officers who care about their communities are worth more than working in a state where they've been repeatedly abandoned by lawmakers instead of supported. Oddly enough, as I wrote this letter a friend of mine from the police academy texted me for the first time in weeks and told me he's not sure if this job is worth it anymore.

Remember, police and lawmakers are not so different. We both know the feeling of making tough decisions despite public opinion. Be brave, don't follow surrounding states for an easy NBC 30 article about how "CT Lawmakers Passed A Sweeping Accountability Bill" in the same, sad story we've already seen played out 100 times over the past several years.

Bravery is the ability to go against the current for what's right. Bravery is not blindly following the herd by saying, "The police need to be reeled in and reformed!" Bravery is saying, "We recognize our police do a great job in Connecticut and we want them to be tough on crime, but our end goal is to prevent crimes from occurring in the first place. We are attacking the roots of criminal behavior by ensuring higher graduation rates, allowing for more fairness in housing, and beginning more community policing programs to make our officers approachable to citizens of every background for positive encounters rather than simply criminal enforcement. We want to send the message that those committing crimes in our communities will held accountable by the police while most good, honest residents from every community should feel comfortable approaching an officer whenever they need help." Do what's right, not what's easy. Be brave.

Thank you for your time,

Adam James

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