

LCO 3471 An Act Concerning Police Accountability

Testimony Subject: Strengthen & Pass Police Accountability Bill in Special Session

My name is Al Benford and I live & vote in Manchester. I am a Unitarian Universalist, and I participate in Black Lives Matter protests and rallies. I am writing in support of LCO #3471: An Act Concerning Police Accountability (AACPA) with amendments.

It is very clear from the ongoing protests following the murder of George Floyd by a police officer that the public is strongly supportive of reforms to police activity targeting People of Color, in particular black men and women. Police should be trained to de-escalate any and all situations. Black men and women should not be dying because of minor offenses that are escalated by police aggressiveness.

Police should also be trained to distinguish between learned fear from our racist culture and fear based on the reality of the present situation. De-escalation should always be the first option. 911 should be modified to send human services personnel to respond to non-violent situations. Body cameras should be mandatory and their use required in all encounters.

I support most sections of LCO 3471 and strongly advocate for strengthening the infrastructure and mechanisms for police accountability in Connecticut.

Section 7- Implicit Bias training

Strengthening implicit bias training for state and municipal law enforcement is critical, and must also include substantive, evidence-informed anti-racism training. Implicit bias training does not go far enough. Both implicit bias and anti-racism training must be informed by research, and must be rigorously evaluated.

Section 8 & 9- Collective Bargaining and Public Records

All complaints, internal affairs' reviews and personnel records of officers against whom complaints have been made by civilians, should be subject to FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) for full transparency.

Section 14- Police Badge and Name Tag Identification

Officers must be required to prominently display their badge and name tag.

Section 17- Civilian Review Board

It is critical that municipalities have a civilian review board with subpoena power and full investigative powers. This legislation should go beyond allowing CRBs and require municipal CRBs with subpoena power.

Section 19 & 20 Body Cameras and Dashboard Cameras

National outcomes on the efficacy of body cameras are mixed. Without accountability around body cameras being turned on and used, body cameras aren't effective in providing true transparency or actual accountability. Body cameras should be triggered by weapons release and have retroactive recapture capabilities. There must also be consequences for not turning body cameras on or else the investment into this technology and video storage is not well spent.

Sections 21 & 22- Prohibition on Consent Searches

Connecticut must ban all stop and frisk related policies and outlaw police searches without probable cause, even if consent is offered. Police officers are frequently intimidating and civilians consent out of fear.

Section 21- Prohibition on Consent Searches

Connecticut must outlaw police officers from asking for any documents other than a driver's license at traffic stops. Asking for non-driving related identification is unnecessary and puts many community members at risk.

Section 30- Officers' Duty to Intervene to Stop Use of Excessive Force

It is important that officers are mandated to intervene when they witness excessive force and that when officers intervene, they do not face retaliation from other police officers.

Section 30- Office of Inspector General

Establishing the Office of Inspector General is an important step in building the necessary infrastructure for independent investigations into use of force and other police misconduct. Police accountability is not possible without independent investigative entities at the state and municipal levels.

Section 40- Prohibition of Police Using Military Equipment

Connecticut does not want or need militarized policing in our communities. We must divest from the 1033 program and dispose of militarized equipment. We understand that the militarization of our police officers only endangers our communities- especially Black and Brown communities.

Section 41- Civil cause of action against certain police officers

We must end qualified immunity for police officers who violate civil rights and perpetrate violence against civilians. Police officers must be held accountable for their misconduct. Just as physicians must carry the liability for malpractice, so must police officers in our state. Corrections officers should also be included in this section of the legislation.

We do not support

- We do not need increased funding for municipal or state police departments. Defunding police is required so that we can reinvest more funds in safe/healthy/affordable housing, healthy food access, clean water & air, education equity, universal quality healthcare for physical and mental health, family sustaining wages and a robust safety net.
- Social workers should NOT work under police departments. Instead we must invest more in models for community accountability and collective care which should include social workers.

Section 13- POST Membership Changes- Overrepresentation of police and elected officials

Police representatives and politicians make up 12 out of 20 members of Police Officer Standards and Training Council in LCO 3471. The POST Council should consist of a civilian majority and not a

majority of politicians and police representatives.

What's missing from this bill

The bill should also remove School Resource Officers (SROs) from schools.

- The school to prison pipeline is real and disproportionately impacts Black and Brown youth
- Research demonstrates that Black youth are perceived as up to 4 years older than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts ([Epstein, Blake & Gonzalez, 2017](#), 2019; [Goff, Jackson et.al., 2014](#))

This bill is just a starting point and we have a great deal of work ahead of us to truly transform policing and ensure accountability. You have an opportunity to pass strong legislation that will make Connecticut safer for all of our residents, especially our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) residents.

Please amend and pass LCO 3471 An Act Concerning Police Accountability.

Thank you,

Alan L. Benford

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