

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Alex Kawa, and I am from Avon. I am writing today to give a testimony regarding Draft LCO 3471 AAC Police Accountability.

There are two aspects of this draft legislation in particular that I would like to discuss my opinions on. The first is qualified immunity, which this draft of this bill bans police officers from invoking to shield themselves from being held liable for civil rights abuses. It is vitally important that we end this doctrine, especially given how many peaceful protests across America have been brutally assaulted, sometimes even tear gassed, by law enforcement. Additionally, Derek Chauvin, the officer who killed George Floyd, had 18 complaints of misconduct prior to the event. Examples such as these are why qualified immunity is a dangerous doctrine that allows law enforcement officials to get away with civil rights abuses, and why the state must end it.

The second provision of the bill I would like to touch on is demilitarization. The draft of this bill would ban Connecticut police departments from receiving military grade, or "controlled," equipment from the federal government. Police militarization is by far and away one of the most misguided and dangerous aspects of the current police state in the nation. According to a 2018 study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, police militarization does not do anything to reduce the crime rate. In fact, as a 2017 study published in SAGE Journals found, militarized police departments are more likely to kill innocent civilians. The origins of the concept of police militarization are also very racist; it was established as a means to enforce the War on Drugs, which President Nixon's staff admitted was a ploy to crack down on communities of color. Knowing these facts, there is absolutely no reason for police forces in Connecticut, or any state for that matter, to carry military equipment.

In conclusion, the provisions of this draft legislation to end qualified immunity for police officers and to demilitarize police forces are crucial steps that we must take, especially given the civil unrest sweeping across the nation at this time, and I strongly urge the assembly to keep these provisions in the final draft of the bill.

Thank you very much,
Alex Kawa