

## Written Testimony in Support of LCO 3471 An Act Concerning Police Accountability

To the members of the Connecticut Judiciary Committee:

I am the Rev. Allie Perry, from New Haven, and a member of the steering committee of Stop Solitary CT. I commend those who have drafted this much needed legislation addressing the imperative for accountability in policing, and more broadly criminal justice, in the state of CT, and I write in strong support. It is time, beyond time, for accountability, oversight, and transparency in regards to the practice of law enforcement. It is time that the racist policies and practices, implicit and too often explicit, in the CT's criminal justice system be eradicated. We need to change a culture of law enforcement that disproportionately targets and harms black and brown persons.

I have three specific recommendations to further strengthen this ambitious and critical legislation:

1. Abuse in the form of chokeholds and restraints and the excessive use of force happen not just in our streets, where cameras can document such abuse, but also in the state's prisons, out of the range of a camera lens. The most egregious instances of such abuse occur in Northern where the practice of solitary confinement there has been denounced as a form of torture by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture. The practice of shackling those incarcerating in solitary cells, using three-point restraints, has been documented in 2019 filing submitted Yale Law School's Lowenstein Clinic to the Special Rapporteur. I urge you to extend the need for accountability, oversight, and transparency to include the Department of Corrections, in addition to Police Departments around the state.

2. The language in Section 17 says that legislative bodies in state towns “may” by ordinance create Civilian Review Boards and that they “may” be vested with authority to issue subpoenas to compel testimony. In the interest and service of accountability to citizenry, I urge you to mandate the creation of Civilian Review Boards and subpoena power rather than to treat this as conditional.

3. Section 29 which addresses the use of force in a variety of situations by various law enforcement personnel including the Department of Corrections (I comment that inclusion) uses the word ‘reasonable’ or some variation of that word (unreasonable, reasonably, etc) multiple times. As a former English teacher, I recognize the license and latitude that terms used broadly or vaguely, whose definition is subjective, in the eye of the beholder, allows. The legislation needs to provide specific definition for the term ‘reasonable, and/or provide criteria for determining what constitutes reasonableness. What a correctional officer, for example, deems reasonable, may be completely unreasonable from the perspective of the person on the receiving end.

Thank you for making this legislation a priority and doing all in your power, through enacting it, to remedy the injustice of racist practices and of excessive use of force that not only harms citizens but infects and de-legitimizes CT’s criminal justice system. The security and well-being of our state’s citizens require greater accountability, oversight, and transparency in our criminal justice system.

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