

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

Thank you for taking this day to listen to our Connecticut community. My biggest concern with this bill is that its intentions are good, but it feels like a small fix to a larger problem. This bill can only be an intermediate step. The police as an institution is, in my opinion, irredeemable. Black and brown folks are in constant fear of encounters with the police, completely contrary to the safety that we all wish they would bring. The things that trouble me about this bill is that it does not see police abolition as the end goal. I believe we have the power to rework our justice system in a way that actually meets the needs of our community.

I support the goal of including more social workers to respond to situations where force is not needed, but they should not be a part of our police system. We should be moving away from police and these efforts should not suffer from being controlled by an untrustworthy and historically racist institution.

Beyond social workers, this bill's push for implicit bias training and more cameras are also in opposition to the end goals of abolition. Instead of divesting, we are just putting more money into the police. Neither of these strategies have been shown to be effective in reducing police violence. We should instead focus on reducing police presence in our communities and reinvest money saved into our communities in social services, affordable housing, and other services that directly assist our communities.

Qualified immunity has been debated throughout this whole listening session. I cannot understand how due to a job, a person can be treated with more leniency under the law. Police should have to defend any decision to take a life, they should not be defended for taking a life. Testifiers today expressed that they don't want police to hesitate in dangerous situations, well I do hope that police hesitate and find another solution. The number of situations where murder will reduce the violence of the situation are so few and far between. A classmate of mine, Peter Manfredonia, was just arrested peacefully after murdering two people. How is it possible that black and brown folks are killed for so much less? I want police, police departments, and police as an institution to be held accountable for these murders.

I would like to say thank you for taking the time to listen and for all of the good that I believe much of this bill will bring. But it is just a first step, and I encourage you all to amend the bill so that it furthers the goals of divesting from police and eventually abolishing police instead of putting more money into a broken system.

Thank you,

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