

Testimony in Response to AAC Police Accountability – LCO 3471

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I have been a Hartford Police Officer for seventeen years. I now serve as the President of the Hartford Police Union. I represent over 430 members. After this Bill was presented to the public my members started to contact me immediately. After reading through it myself I then understood why my members started to panic with the Amendments in this Bill. As a police officer we run towards danger with complete disregard for ourselves to help protect life and property of others. When police officers are called to act, the person in need is depending on the officer to help and many times is counting on us to save their life.

Section 29 amends the way Police Officers are justified in deadly force situations. The way the law is amended an officer would have to “*exhaust all feasible alternatives to the use of deadly physical force*”. These are split second life saving decisions that are made in the face of danger. Then the officer will be scrutinized because he or she was not *objectively reasonable*. I ask that our elected officials place themselves or their loved ones in this situation. Would you want a police officer to save you or your loved ones? Or would you want the police to hesitate and possibly cause you, your loved one, or even the officer’s own life to be lost because the officer second guessed his or her decision? Police in the State of Connecticut are already under extreme scrutiny from the public, and elected officials.

In **section 41**, language in the Bill repeals qualified immunity and governmental immunity for police officers. This will force police to only act when dispatched to a situation where state law or department policy would require officers to act. If officers know that they are open to civil liability and not protected by the government, we will have no other reasonable choice in many situation other than to stand back. This will have a drastic impact on crime as crime rates will soar. Throughout several parts of the State we have already seen a drastic uptick in violent crime. New Haven has seen this as of late with its worse uptick in crime since 2011. This is happening without this Bill in place. If this Bill is passed in its current form it will allow the criminal element to control our communities. No police officer will risk losing everything the he or she has worked so hard for just to be left unprotected by the government that hires them. Losing qualified immunity and governmental immunity will also have a significant impact on the recruitment and retention of police officers. This is one of the most serious impacts of this Bill. Finding qualified individuals to enter into the profession of policing has become a problem nationwide. This problem will only get worse in this anti-police climate further putting the public at risk.

I ask you, our elected officials, to work together and make this Bill more practical on all levels. This is not the time for knee jerk reactions or end fighting. This needs to be a well-thought-out process that includes the input of law enforcement and other important stakeholders that you will be hearing from today.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anthony Rinaldi

Hartford Police Union