

Testimony in SUPPORT of LCO# 3471 **“An Act Concerning Police Accountability.”**

7/22/2020

Dear Connecticut Legislators,

My name is Camille Kritzman and I live in New Haven, CT. I am writing to express my **support** for **LCO# 3471 “An Act Concerning Police Accountability.”** I am a Case Manager in New Haven and work with communities who are victim of over-policing. I have seen the negative life-long effects that the police in CT have imparted among CT’s Black and Brown and poor communities. Spending any amount of time in a CT courthouse will show how much Black and Brown people are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement and end up paying thousands of dollars in fees and tickets and charges white and wealthy residents easily avoid. We have seen Black and Brown children killed by police officers with impunity in this state. How many more deaths will it take before we see accountability? It pains me to know that as a tax payer in CT, I am contributing to this cycle of terror and violence. That is why I think it so important for police accountability to be addressed in CT. In any other profession, misconduct results in firing. But with police, it results in unlimited protection from the state of CT.

Specifically, I am writing to support the following and ask that amendments be made to further strengthen this bill:

-Stronger Use of Force Standard. The bill should require that any use of deadly force is ‘necessary’ rather than the current standard of ‘objectively reasonable.’ The officer must engage in multiple efforts of de-escalation before using force, and the failure to do so will result in the instant termination of that officer’s employment. This standard should also include an officers’ entire engagement with a person(s) rather than just the moment when severe or deadly force was used.

- Granting power that allows municipalities to establish Civilian Review Boards with Subpoena powers. This ensures that the community that is effectively paying for the police has a say in how we are governed. That is a pillar of a democratic society, and anything else is oppressive.

-Outlawing police searches without probable cause, even if the person consents to the search. Law enforcement agents have many tactics to pressure people into consenting when they don’t fully understand the rights that they have. Police officers must not act in a way that is coercing people to surrender their civil liberties

-Police officers should not be allowed to ask for any documents (such as green cards, and other immigration documents) other than a driver's license during traffic stops. The police do not need to act as federal agents and having police officers ask for documentation creates a system where undocumented people are more vulnerable and risk being separated from their families for a minor infraction.

-Mandating a duty to intervene if a police officer witnesses another officer using excessive or illegal use-of-force. Police officers have a duty to protect the community, not other police officers from accountability.

-Ending qualified immunity for officers who violate people’s civil rights

-Banning stop-and-frisk in Connecticut. This policy is racist, oppressive, and must be explicitly mentioned in this bill.

-Demilitarizing of Connecticut police departments, including the disposal of all military equipment currently held by police departments. There is no reason a local community police operation should have access to weapons of war. It does not make the community safer, in fact, it does the opposite.

Requiring that police officers to prominently display their badge at all times and keep body cameras on. The footage should be public record and easily and instantly accessible.

I also want to highlight the components of the bill I **disagree** with, which include:

-Increasing funding for police departments, whether municipal or state. A safe community is a healthy community, where everyone has access to basic needs. That must take precedence over a police department. I support the immediate defunding and divestment from police departments and reallocation of these resources for social services.

-Adding social workers to police departments. The current bill calls for a study be conducted by departments on this matter. Social workers should be used for certain emergency/mental health calls but they should not work under police departments.

-The overrepresentation of police officers and politicians on the Police Officer Standards and Training Council. They make up 12/20 of the Council's membership. This council should be dominated by civilians not politicians or police officers.

Thank you for your time.

Best,

Camille Krtizman

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