

July 16, 2020

Dear Connecticut Legislators,

My name is Cassi Meyerhoffer and I am a resident of Hamden, CT. I am writing to share my support for regarding LCO 3471, An Act Concerning Police Accountability.

This bill contains a number of measures that I support. It also contains some provisions that need amending before we can meaningfully reshape policing in Connecticut.

While accountability measures are a good start, they are not enough. We need to divest from policing and reinvest in communities that have been historically disenfranchised. While I support this bill, it cannot be the end of the conversation.

Here are the measures that I support:

I support granting power that allows municipalities to establish Civilian Review Boards with Subpoena powers; however, rather than stating that municipalities “may” establish CRBs with Subpoena powers, we need to change the language to “must” or “shall.”

I support outlawing police searches without probable cause, even if the person consents to the search.

I support outlawing police officers from asking for any documents (such as green cards, other immigration documents) other than a driver's license from people they pull-over during traffic stops.

I support mandating a duty to intervene if a police officer witnesses another officer using excessive or illegal use-of-force.

I support ending qualified immunity for officers who violate people's civil rights.

I support banning stop-and-frisk in Connecticut.

I support the demilitarization of Connecticut police departments, including the disposal of all military equipment currently held by police departments.

I support the requirement for police officers to prominently display their badge and they must be held accountable if they do not display their badge, unless they can *prove* they are in imminent danger.

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

I do not support the increasing funding for police departments, whether municipal or state. The focus of any substantial changes to policing need to address divestment, not investment in policing. For example, section 20 introduces a multi-million-dollar investment in body cameras to be worn by officers at all times. Not only does this increase investment in policing and take money away from programs that could lift up communities, it increases surveillance of communities that are already over-policed.

I do not support adding social workers to police departments. Social workers should be used for certain emergency/mental health calls but they should not work under police departments.

I do not support 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.

Here's what needs to be strengthened:

This bill is only a starting point and does not remotely address divesting from the police in a meaningful way. This bill continues to speak to reform and retraining policies rather than major divestment, which is what Connecticut needs if it wishes to see changes in how police function in our state.

Thank you for your time.

Best,

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An Act Concerning Police Accountability, LCO# 3471