



**CITY OF NEW HAVEN
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July 22, 2020

Connecticut General Assembly
Judiciary Committee

Re: Testimony in Support for LCO# 3471 "An Act Concerning Police Accountability."

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Darryl J. Brackeen, Jr., and I am a local elected leader in the City of New Haven. It is with a combination of grief, great concern, and hope that I am writing to express my total support for LCO# 3471 "An Act Concerning Police Accountability."

Police accountability involves holding both individual police officers, as well as law enforcement agencies responsible for effectively delivering basic services of crime control and maintaining order while treating individuals fairly and within the bounds of law.

I believe that Law enforcement's first job is to ensure our safety while respecting our constitutional rights. Too many police officers have violated this responsibility, disproportionately targeting Black and Brown Americans—with deadly consequences, and with no accountability. Law enforcement should be a source of protection, not additional violence.

Police forces have fatally shot countless numbers of people in Connecticut and across the nation causing several needless deaths – again and again with no accountability. The recent and tragic cases of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many others remind us that police violence has again and too often, taken on a racial dimension. It is unacceptable and there is simply no excuse for law enforcement to treat Black and Brown Americans any differently. Failure to do so has created massive pain, emotion, fear in communities across our country, and a threat of civil discourse.

As the late civil rights leader, Congressman John Lewis said, "When you see something that is not right, not just, not fair, you have a moral obligation to say something. To do something. Our children and their children will ask us, 'What did you do? What did you say?' For some, this vote may be hard. But we have a mission and a mandate to be on the right side of history."

Therefore, as an African American, a father, an elected leader, and concerned citizen, it is my mission and mandate to speak out and whole-heartedly support LCO# 3471 "An Act Concerning Police Accountability."

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

- Granting power that allows municipalities to establish Civilian Review Boards with Subpoena powers. (Note: as written, the bill currently says CRB's 'may' have subpoena power, not 'must'. That language is key).

- Outlawing police searches without probable cause, even if the person consents to the search
- Outlawing police offers from asking for any documents (such as green cards, and other immigration documents) other than a driver's license during traffic stops (as written, the bill currently says police can ask for other forms of ID if someone does not provide a license. This is an unsafe measure for the undocumented community).
- Mandating a duty to intervene if a police officer witnesses another officer using excessive or illegal use-of-force
- Ending qualified immunity for officers who violate people's civil rights
- Banning stop-and-frisk in Connecticut
- Demilitarizing of Connecticut police departments, including the disposal of all military equipment currently held by police departments
- Requiring that police officers to prominently display their badge
- 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.' 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. (Note: this specific provision is soul wrenching because police are NEVER justified in killing our people. The idea that police use force to make themselves safer is not true. We have seen police use life-preserving skills when responding to white male mass shooters like Dylann Roof. In that case, police never found it "necessary" to "use force," even though Dylann Roof had murdered several people within a church. Police protected him without conditions. But when police interact with people of color, particularly Black and Brown youth like Jayson Negron, Mubarak Soulemane, Zoe Dowdell, Corbin Cooper, Jarelle Gibbs, Vincent Folkwes (Kuda), Malik Jones, Anthony Vega (Chulo), and so many others in this state who have been murdered at the hands of police, the "use of force" becomes "necessary." Police in this state do not prioritize preventing harm when they encounter people of color. We know this because we have seen police escalate violence and cause harm over and over again: in over 30 police killings within the last three years, in their interactions with protestors, and in everyday abuses against people of color. The conditions that determine when police will "use force" and when police practice "de-escalation" tactics are directly connected to a person's race, gender, housing status, mental health, and disabilities. Nonetheless, we must push legislators to use and define words like 'necessary force' and 'de-escalation').

Additionally, I would like to highlight the components of the bill that I disagree with, which include:

- Increasing funding for police departments, whether municipal or state. We 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 to 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.

Sincerely,

Darryl J. Brackeen, Jr.

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