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Connecticut General Assembly      *Sent via e-mail to [JUDtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:JUDtestimony@cga.ct.gov)*  
Attn: Judiciary Committee  
Hartford, CT

RE: Written Testimony Opposing LCO #3471

Dear Representatives and Senators of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Donald Bridge, Jr. from Somers Connecticut. I write opposing LCO #3471, "An Act Concerning Police Accountability".

As a currently certified police officer by The Police Officers Training Council (POSTC) for nearly thirty years I am, along with all of the police officers in the State, both part of the community we serve and the government protecting that community. We all take an oath to support, obey, and defend the Constitution of the United States of America, and the Constitution of the State of Connecticut; to faithfully discharge all lawful orders and directives, according to law, without prejudice, or regard for personal feelings or benefit; and to the best of our abilities, to serve honestly, faithfully, and impartially in the performance of our duties incumbent upon us as Police Officers.

The purpose of law enforcement and police officers in a free society is to promote public safety and uphold the rule of law so that individual liberties may flourish. Our duties as police officers help to protect the communities we serve and to ensure the citizens of our communities can safely enjoy the freedoms provided to us by the Constitution of the United States of America, and the Constitution of the State of Connecticut. The vast majority of police officers are good and many police officers have given their lives performing those duties protecting the citizens of the State from those who choose to violate others freedoms. Before one becomes a police officer, we undergo many tests: written, physical agility, psychological, and polygraph to start. Once passing those tests, one attends the Police Academy for at least twenty weeks and thousands of hours of training followed by at least four hundred hours of on the job field training (FTO) at the Police Department supervised by a Field Training Officer.

I clearly understand the need to review police accountability from time-to-time and to ensure the system is transparent for those that we protect. In doing so there is a difficult and delicate balance in achieving transparency and accountability while providing the proper support to our police officers so they may perform their duties without fear of losing their own freedoms. While there are a number of good parts to this act, there are also a number of very damaging parts of this act that will strip the ability of police officers to perform their duties and require additional costs to police departments and the communities they serve that are already having difficulty with their current financial difficulties. Police officers will be hesitant to act in fear of losing everything. The communities will be even

more hard pressed to fill job openings and provide public safety and uphold the rule of law so that individual liberties may flourish within their communities.

First and foremost is the removal of qualified immunity. Qualified immunity protects good police officers performing their duties protecting others and their constitutional rights. Qualified immunity is not a free pass. Police officers are not provided qualified immunity if they act outside the scope of the law and their training. Second, is the creation of more government to perform functions that already are in place such as the creation of the Inspectors General Office in place of the Division of Criminal Justice review of a Police Officers use of physical force. The Division of Criminal Justice currently reviews cases of all police shootings, which statistically is low. Additionally, this act has a number of sections that expands policies and procedures already in place and used by many if not all police departments. Yes, create one POSTC standard created by individuals familiar with the requirements of police work for all to follow. Yes, include others from the outside so they can add to the conversation and provide a different point of view. Yes, require drug and alcohol testing for recertification. Yes, provide just cause psychological testing. And yes, ensure the current database includes all police officers who have been fired or “allowed to resign” before being fired because of their poor work ethic or their bad behavior. In my opinion, the biggest shortfall for police accountability is from poor supervision. Provide police officers with the power to intervene when another police officer crosses the line. A new police officer is hesitant to tell the seasoned police officer to stop when that police officer is doing something wrong. Supervisors tend to “backup” the seasoned police officer rather than the newer one. What happens, the new police officer just stays silent and learns that its okay, when in actuality it is not okay. Provide better supervisor training and give them the tools to identify and call out the bad police officers. Provide them with the information and documentation that shows them, requires them, to act rather than overlook someone’s bad habits or actions just because they are “making arrests”. Most of all, look at the facts and do not enact legislation based on “feelings”. There are others that will surely provide you the factual data and I hope that you will look at the data, use the data and at the end of the day, if you do anything, you do something that will provide all the citizens, including our police officers, of this great State with the freedoms and liberties they should enjoy. We all want to leave our homes in the morning and come back at the end of the day.

Thank you for your time, again I oppose LCO #3471.

Respectfully,

Donald C. Bridge, Jr.

C:     Senator John Kissel  
       Representative Themis Klarides  
       Representative Kurt Vail  
       File