

Thank for the opportunity to speak with you on this issue. It is very important to me for several reasons. The primary reason being that I have come, through my own experiences, to see that the police are acting in many neighborhoods more as an occupying army. It invades and polices people who are begging to have their tax funds go to mental health, education and community resources rather than a dangerous and militarized police that tends to protect an unjust way of life more than their lives. How would you feel if squads of people heavily armed with both weapons and bias about you, patrolled your suburban neighborhoods and roughed people up or even killed them as they went about their day? Or how about if your son was killed after school walking home? Would you not want that to end?

That is the overview. Nationally.

In Ct my own experiences speak to the dangers and lack of accountability of the current system as well.

The first is as a medical provider. I have an autistic patient who also struggles with depression and suicidal ideation. At one point we needed to call emergency services because we believed her to be in danger of suicide. The police came to her house fully armed, and followed her around until the ambulance came, basically terrifying her. She now will not talk about whether she is suicidal, and we have lost the ability to protect her by having emergency services support, because she is traumatized and has PTSD about "men with guns coming into her house." How much more productive could it have been if a caring trained professional had come instead? What reason did they have for needing to be armed in that situation? This patient is white. How much more terrifying would it have been if she had been Black as well as autistic?

The second scenario I want to talk about was the recent incident in West Haven. I was there with my 15 year old daughter. She got a very clear lesson in who the police protect and who they have no accountability to when the car that drove through the crowd almost hit her, and the police protected the car first, then the driver, and not the people she had endangered. In fact, the police hit my daughter, and shoved her and threatened to hit her again for videotaping the whole episode. The police were smiling while taunting people with the dogs. They said things like "look at what a scene you're making"-as if the people asking for the woman who had just driven recklessly and with intent to harm through a crowd of people be arrested, is making a scene. These police officers were masked for COVID protection at first, but later took off their masks as they stood in line in front of the police station (for what purpose when this was a peaceful crowd-who knows) much less than 6 feet apart, almost shoulder to shoulder. When a city councilman asked them why they weren't wearing the PPE provided to them at taxpayer expense, they refused to answer. They showed that they are confident they will not be held accountable for their actions. And it is this confidence that gives away the truth that they are very used to having no accountability. This is the same throughout CT. The knowledge that they are protected and shielded from accountability is not just in CT. We saw that in Hartford recently when the Union head refused to agree that they would answer the loud and desperate calls of the people for citizen oversight that actually has teeth. He knew. This must change. People deserve to have a say in how crime is managed in their neighborhoods. They deserve to expect protection and also understanding of the issues in their neighborhoods. For too long our politicians have supported systems of oppression, and this is one of them. It is time for you all to become true agents of change and do something about it.

Thank you very much.

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