

Dear Senators:

I write to you today as a proud member of the Connecticut State Police, I have dedicated my life to improving the quality of life for my fellow citizens here in our great State and today I reach out to you asking you to stand up for my abilities to do this job at the highest capacity. Legislation has been drafted in Connecticut in response to the illegal actions of officers in Minneapolis resulting in the senseless death of a member of the public – this has outraged all of us within our profession and we agree with the swift action taken to rectify this circumstance.

We do however hope Connecticut does not create another tragedy responding to this tragedy by adopting legislation without proper thought and input from those who will be impacted directly - specifically I have concerns the intentions of the draft proposal may have unintended consequences that will diminish the effectiveness of police officers across our state.

I would like to you to consider my concerns about the draft proposal:

Section 1-4, and 15 addresses police certification and decertification. There does not appear to be an ability for an officer to be represented by counsel either in the decertification process before the board and/or no remedy for appealing the action taken by the board - There should be some type of due process in this system. Who oversees the drug test screening? Is it confidential? Periodic Mental Health Assessments, are these confidential? Who oversees this program?

Section 3, and 15-16 – There is no mention of the officer being able to be represented in this process. There is no ability for counsel or independent review to appeal determination. To be recertified, the officer must have periodic mental health screenings (not less than once every five years) who oversees this process. The decertification process explains an officer being decertified (then fired) for improperly using force. This will make officers second guess when and where and how much force to use. This causes officers to hesitate, often times, causing more force to be used later.

Section 8 and 9 – collective bargaining – I oppose any legislation that would infringe on our rights to collectively bargain or disrupt any contracts currently in place. Contracts were negotiated in good faith. The CSP Union has specific language addressing some of these situations, if the State wishes to change them, go through the contract negotiating process.

Section 17 – civilian review boards – There are significant concerns about the definition of excessive / deadly force and varying subjective opinions by numerous different entities. Who on the civilian review board will know how to issue subpoenas? What is the standard for this?

Section 29 – The definition of when an officer can use deadly force uses words such as “ he or she has exhausted all reasonable alternatives to the use of deadly force and reasonably believes force creates no substantial risk to 3rd party.” Who determines what “all” reasonable alternatives are; would using a firearm against a knife wielding suspect be acceptable or would the officer need to try a taser first? Also, in this section, an officer must deescalate; when do you deescalate in an active shooter situation? How is the legislature going to make this law effective October 1, 2020, when 8,000 police officers need to be trained prior to being held to the new standards?

Section 41 – Qualified Immunity is critical in law enforcement. Qualified Immunity as always

balanced the interest of all by holding public officials responsible when they exercise their power irresponsibly and the protection from liability when they act reasonably.

Please take into consideration that yes, we are troopers, however we are also mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. We all have loved ones that we are responsible for, and we CHOOSE to take care of the citizens of this State, each and every day putting ourselves at risk of not coming home. By blindly following this trend of demonizing law enforcement you put these selfless individuals and the citizens of this State in danger.

Sincerely,

Emily George