

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Ranking Members Kissel and Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I'm Frankie Ashun, a resident of Killingly, CT. I'm a queer Black woman living in a predominantly white town, and I grew up in a community severely malnourished by food insecurity, poverty, and a lack of resources for many people struggling with opioid addiction. I graduated from UConn in 2019, and most of my academic interests had to do with equity, accountability, and justice for vulnerable individuals who may be targeted due to race, class, and gender. I support legislation that is meant to hold police departments—that historically have not offered safety and security to many people due to their gendered and racial experience—accountable. Creating more legislature that is meant to hold police departments accountable honors the extremely negative impact of policing on many vulnerable communities, but I also want to note that I want to see the state work to divest from policing to reinvest in our communities. Rather than relying on what national grassroots organization Critical Resistance would say is “a social relationship made up of a set of practices that are empowered by the state to enforce law and social control through the use of force,” I believe we have every opportunity as a community to divert much of the money being put into police departments in CT towards healthcare, affordable housing, education, and other important social services that can interrupt crime. The Policy Accountability Bill (LCO #3471) proposed is a great start, but I would ask to see a few amendments before I consider supporting it as a CT constituent.

In **Sections 1-4 & 15** of this bill, the current language suggests that police have the authority to control the processes of how police are (de)certified, I believe it would be worthwhile to create an independent body to evaluate these circumstances, as having police officers control their own accountability can be a conflict of interest. Similar to that note, **Section 18** requires that police departments evaluate whether or not it is feasible for social workers to respond to certain calls, and these reports are submitted to an outside body. I believe it's important to start the important work of divesting and defunding police departments in order to pay more attention to issues within the community that can be responded to with social workers, healthcare employees, and other professionals in our community. However, to have police officers decide whether they should police or hand off the work to other professionals is problematic. This is a conflict of interest and I believe this section in particular should be amended to make sure an external body has the power to choose whether a situation should be responded with police force or social services. With divestment in mind, I believe **Section 40** which requires police departments to dispose of military designed equipment within six months is very essential. Police departments do not need military grade equipment to respond to community issues, and often can alienate their communities with such overwhelming force. **Section 20** of this bill mandates that police officers must wear bodycams and all police vehicles must have dash-cams. Unfortunately, it has been shown that the use of body cameras and dashcams do not interrupt police brutality or the killing of civilians by police officers. Philando Castile is a prime example of this phenomena. Minnesota police officer Jeronimo Yanez did not have a bodycam on the day he murdered Castile, but dashcam footage from his vehicle was used in court, ultimately showing that the footage was much too vague to be used for anything substantial. I use Castile's experience as an example because police officers' lack of accountability is a much bigger problem than can be solved by adding a few surveilling methods for officers. Body-worn cameras cannot reduce police violence without adequate policies that provide real accountability for police, I'd also like to mention that a 2016 study from George Mason University found that “92.6 percent of prosecutors' offices nationally in jurisdictions

where police wear body cameras have used that footage as evidence in cases against private citizens, while just 8.3 percent have used it to prosecute police officers” (Norwood 2020).

Section 20 allows for more grant funding to be funneled into police departments, and is antithetical to the idea of defunding police departments in order to invest in our communities.

Overall, bills like this offer a glimpse into a future where communities are nourished rather than punished. I hope that more legislature like this is introduced, and the bill in question is amended to take into account the very real concerns many citizens have about accountability, checks and balances, and defunding police departments. Thank you.

Frankie Ashun

Killingly, CT