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Testimony of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
in support of *LCO No. 3471 An Act Concerning Police Accountability*
July 17, 2020

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Ranking Members Kissel and Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Gretchen Raffa, Senior Director of Public Policy, Advocacy & Organizing at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support of *LCO No. 3471 An Act Concerning Police Accountability*. We are the state's largest provider of sexual and reproductive health care to over 70,000 patients every year at 16 health centers across the state. As health care experts, our top priority is the health and safety of our patients. That concern for patients does not stop once they leave our doors and that is what compels us to speak out against the over policing of Black people and people of color in our state and demand more police accountability.

Policing does not equal safety. We know when our Black patients and staff leave our health centers, they walk on to streets where law enforcement officers pull them over, abuse and murder them, and target them for the color of their skin. The policing of Black bodies extends far beyond the actions of individual police officers. It's in every system that governs us-- education, transportation, housing, health care and more. It is in our workplaces, our schools, our public institutions. It is in our health care system.

If Black people do not have the right to bodily autonomy to live their daily lives — or protest the violence against their lives — without the fear of violence or murder, they can never achieve justice, let alone reproductive freedom. It is that same policing through policies that attack our bodily autonomy that makes the promise of reproductive freedom unattainable for Black people in our state and in this country.

Elected officials across this country have been neglecting the essential services that keep our communities healthy — education, social services, the health care safety net — by pouring money into military-style police forces that continue to commit abuses and take lives without consequences. It's time to shift our priorities and we call on our legislature to pass meaningful policy that addresses systemic racism.

That is why Planned Parenthood stands with the Movement for Black Lives' call to defund the police. Defunding the police means investing less in militarizing police forces and investing more in community-based solutions, education, and health care. We are calling for a model that promotes community support, connects individuals to available services and seeks to prioritize public health approaches over further investment in policing.

Police violence and racism is happening across our state, especially to Black people and people of color. Connecticut police are killing and hurting people. People are on the streets protesting these acts of violence in our state and there is still no justice for the Black and Latinx people here who have lost their lives at the hands of police. Planned Parenthood stands in solidarity with protestors, especially Black women, who have been putting themselves on the front lines of the fight for freedom and justice, and who have been at the forefront of the Black Lives Matter movement.

We support *LCO No. 3471 An Act Concerning Police Accountability* and urge the legislature to pass this bill as it contains some important measures of police accountability and police divestment. This bill also contains some provisions which require changes before their intent of meaningfully reshaping policing can be fully realized. This legislation cannot be the end of the conversation. The General Assembly must do more in upcoming sessions, especially around divesting from policing if it is committed to ending police violence in our state.

At Planned Parenthood of Southern New England we will continue to fight for a future where Black people and people of color have the right to live their daily lives without fear of violence; make choices about their bodies without fear of persecution; and access sexual and reproductive health care without systemic barriers.