

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee, Senate and House Leadership,  
 My name is Helen Ward and I live and vote in Hamden. I am writing to urge you to pass LCO #3471 An Act Concerning Police Accountability (AACPA) with amendments. This proposed bill includes critical reforms, especially section 41 (elimination of qualified immunity), section 40 (De-militarization), section 17 (Empowering Civilian Review Boards with Subpoena Power) and section 30 (Duty to Intervene). With that said, this bill is only a starting point. We need to re-imagine policing and re-invest in our communities (especially housing, education and health care) in ways that prioritize public health over further investment in policing.

I ask that you include these measures to strengthen the bill further:

- Stronger Use of Force Standard: The bill should require that any use of deadly force is “necessary,” rather than the current standard of “objectively reasonable.” The use of force standard should include an officer’s entire engagement with a person rather than just the moment when severe or deadly force was used. Did the officer attempt to de-escalate the situation? Did the officer use force proportional to the seriousness of the situation? What led to encounter initially, and was the use of force necessary at all?
- Inspector General Hiring & Firing: The proposed bill includes the creation of an Inspector General to investigate incidents of police use of force, but leaves the hiring & firing of that position to the Chief State's Attorney at will; this is a conflict of interest. The Inspector General should be appointed by the Criminal Justice Commission directly.
- Public Right to Record Police: Ban police officers from taking cell phones or other recording devices without a person's consent or warrant. Give civilians the right to sue police departments if they take or destroy these devices without cause, as is exemplified in Colorado Law.
- Police Failure to Record: Even with police body & dash cameras adopted by police departments, too often use of force incidents do not get recorded. The bill should establish a rebuttable presumption that, if there is no police video recording of an incident, the officer is presumed to have used excessive force.

For too long black and brown people have been treated with disrespect and too often violence at the hands of police. Treating all citizens equally and holding the police accountable for their actions will make all of us safer.

Thank you,  
 Helen Ward  
 Hamden, CT