

July 18, 2020

Judiciary Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2500
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Suggested Amendments and Support for Draft Bill LCO No. 3471, An Act Concerning Police Accountability

Honorable Judiciary Committee Co-Chairs Sen. Gary Winfield, Rep. Steve Stafstrom, Sen. John Kissel of Enfield and Rep. Rosa Rebimbas, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am a New Haven resident. I submitted written testimony on July 10, 2020 before this draft legislation became available; that testimony is incorporated here in its entirety by reference. At this time I'd like to propose specific amendments to the draft bill.

Egregious behavior in an officer's encounter with a suspect may reflect the result of a lifetime of an officer's experiences, producing subconscious attitudes that may promote excessive violence when confronting a suspect. When present, such attitudes are deeply ingrained in one's psyche.

I favor rigorous training by a qualified mental health professional directed to instilling respect and professional behavior toward every subject during an encounter involving police intervention. Effective training to accomplish this has to include, first, that it should occur a) initially on enactment of the legislation, b) identically for all new recruits prior to being commissioned as officers, and, most importantly, c) **in an ongoing training program**, as "continuing education", **at intervals of one to no more than three years**.

Second, it is crucial to assess each officer's or recruit's assimilation of the material conveyed during training, **including their ability to act according to its teachings**. The assessment is to be carried out each time the officer or recruit has the scheduled training. **This requirement expands the definition of "mental health assessment" in Sec. 16 (a) (2) in the Draft Bill, and should be incorporated as an amendment.**

The bill also references establishing policies, in Sec. 3 (a) (24), including "(E) the process for selecting psychiatrists and psychologists to conduct such assessments." This provision is consistent with the need for qualified professionals such as psychiatrists and psychologists to evaluate an officer's ability to act according to the teachings of the training. **The bill should be amended to reflect this necessity.**

Sec. 3 (a) (9) supports "an interactive electronic computer platform capable of administering training courses" and its use in review training. I strongly **oppose** this provision, at least as regards the psychological training discussed in this testimony. As noted above, it's important to assess both assimilation of psychological training material **and** the officer's/recruit's ability to act according to its teachings. Such assessment is beyond the capability of an interactive computer platform. Rather, it requires personal assessment by a qualified psychiatrist or

psychologist, selected according to Sec. 3 (a) (24) (E). **The bill should be amended to make clear that effective assessment can only be carried out by a qualified psychiatrist or psychologist.**

In conclusion I strongly support passage of LCO No. 3471 with the amendments suggested here.

Sincerely,

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