

My name is Isabel, and I'm from Berlin, CT. I pray that this email isn't being sent too late, as I was just made aware of the details of the misguided legislation being discussed today.

While I am happy to know that the state of Connecticut is doing something to try to improve policing, I am writing to express how saddened I am over the contemplation of doing away with qualified immunity for police officers. Please do NOT do away with qualified immunity. This would be a tragedy, not just for police officers, but for our citizens and the communities they protect. It will make officers less likely to do their jobs for fear of excessive lawsuits, and it will certainly scare off future officers from wanting to pursue this profession that NEEDS to attract the very best. I understand the need for some measures of police reform. I want ALL citizens to feel protected by law enforcement, and I understand that we have a ways to go in re-establishing trust between communities and police in certain cities. This will take a lot of work, reform, and difficult conversations, community efforts. However, I strongly believe the answer to this rift is better community policing. The answer is NOT less policing, less safety for our officers, or deterrents that will make officers hesitate before doing their jobs.

Most of these men and women are brave people who CHOOSE to do a thankless job. The excellent officers serving in this thankless role have next to nothing in common with the likes of Derek Chauvin and other officers who have betrayed their oath. We cannot start painting entire groups of people with one broad brush, or we will become the worst of hypocrites. It is very clear that officers are under a microscope right now. Some are being FAIRLY condemned, because they did, in fact, do something awful. And those officers need to be prosecuted in the court of law. (Derek Chauvin is a perfect example of this.) However, we needn't weaken protections for GOOD officers who are doing their jobs by removing qualified immunity, or who will be left to step up and keep us safe? I tend to think that this will result in worse policing and therefore, worse crime.

There are lots of people living in a state of constant fear and anxiety. Many activists have said the source of much of their fear is corrupt policing. That is tragic, and our state certainly owes it to them to root that out as best as possible. No one should be in constant fear of the police, and we need to address corruption and bias when we see it. But again, the answer is NOT to create more fear among officers and their families, fear that even if their family member returns safely home from policing, their lives might still be destroyed, even if that officer did everything "by the book" but might be unfairly accused of inappropriate conduct. There should be changes in how officers are hired, fired, trained, and held accountable, but removing qualified immunity is not the way to go.

I appreciate Connecticut making moves to try to legislate some police reform, but this step is incredibly misguided and SO very dangerous for our communities in the long run. Please, take the removal of qualified immunity OFF the table. Pursuing that in the legislation would be a disaster for us all.

Isabel