

Written Testimony Regarding LCO No. 3471, An Act Concerning Police Accountability

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

My name is Janée Woods Weber and I live in West Hartford, Connecticut. I serve as the Co-Chair and as a representative for the First Congressional District for the State Committee of the Connecticut Working Families Party. We are a progressive grassroots political party building a multiracial movement of working people to transform America. I am also a founding member of CT Black Women, which works to support racial justice and Black liberation for Black women and girls. In addition to my affiliations with WFP and CT Black Women, I am also an activist who has taken to the streets far too many times over the last several years to protest acts of police brutality, including murder, that have happened not only in other states in our country but right here in our home state of Connecticut. I am frustrated by the ongoing need to protest the lack of accountability for the conditions of overpolicing, brutal policing, and deadly policing that harm our communities, especially Black communities, communities of color, and poor communities.

My testimony concerns LCO No. 3471, An Act Concerning Police Accountability. This bill contains several important measures for police accountability and police divestment, which I support. This bill also contains some provisions that must be changed to ensure a true system of police accountability that is equitable, transparent, consistent, moral and just, and supports human rights and public safety. With regard to the provisions that must be changed, I urge this Committee to follow the recommendations for amendments to Sections 10, 11, 16, 29, and 33-35 that appear in the written testimony submitted by Melvin J. Medina, Public Policy and Advocacy Director for the ACLU of Connecticut. This Committee should also carefully consider and act upon the cautions also laid out by the ACLU of Connecticut regarding Sections 1-4, 15, and 18.

I wish to call your attention to Section 28, which is being called the Amy Cooper Bill by many. I support this section and encourage its passage because we need more legislation that addresses the bigotry, hate, racism and white supremacy that allow people in the majority to harm people of color and other people with identities that are in the minority. Far too often, we have witnessed people, especially white women, make false reports that essentially serve to weaponize the 911 system and the police system against Black and brown people who are not in fact committing any crime, with the knowledge that doing so is likely to cause harm or death to the Black or brown people by the police and the criminal justice system. Therefore the increased penalties

contained within the provision are necessary to act as a proper deterrent to would-be offenders and as a consequence for offenders. I encourage this Committee to also consider (1) adding a penalty requiring the offender to attend anti-bias/antiracism training at their own expense and (2) providing an avenue for victims to pursue a civil action for compensatory damages and other equitable relief, in addition to any other civil remedy available.

Now is the time for this Committee to act and to recommend this bill. For several weeks now, thousands of people from all backgrounds have been rallying and protesting on the steps of the Capitol, disrupting their communities with marches and civil disobedience, and contacting their legislators to demand change that leads to more accountability and oversight for the police. The people have spoken and will continue to speak out against racism and lack of accountability for police. I know that my voice is not alone in asking the General Assembly to pass this bill.

Thank you for this time to testify and for listening.