

Thank you for hearing my testimony on the CT police accountability bill. In Connecticut we have recently had shootings of unarmed drivers in New Haven and Wethersfield. In Orange, the son of a friend simply walking in his own neighborhood was surrounded by police cars on two consecutive days.

**I believe police SHOULD be held accountable.** Especially when using force. My father, a lieutenant in NYPD called to riot duty in 1964 in Harlem and even he admitted some of his colleagues in the department were prejudiced. He thought a civilian review board a good idea. No one is above the law.

Our communities do need to be protected from criminals. Many police in Norwalk are encouraged by Mayor Rilling to do just that. Police need to befriend and protect the people in ALL neighborhoods, including neighborhoods that are primarily black and brown, who too often fear the police.

Who can blame them for being afraid of police when we see murders of black people being casually committed and videotaped and broadcast on TV, as we did when Officer Chauvin crushed his knee into the neck of George Floyd? And so many more acts of excessive use of force like that are never known or made public.

Each case should be evaluated. My father spoke about dangers he faced and at times a crowd could get out of hand and force could be necessary. But how much force is necessary? Other times people are unarmed and not a threat and are treated like dangerous criminals.

We should NOT grant police automatic immunity until an investigation is conducted. This accountability is critical especially if someone is injured or killed in police custody. Otherwise we have racial and social unrest. After the killing of George Floyd, a protest movement against racism grew across the country, and in Connecticut even people in predominantly white neighborhoods like Wilton and Westport stood up for accountability. Suburban people believe in law too, and in justice and our American creed of liberty and justice for ALL.

Those reforms should include transparency and release of data on the use of force, an objective investigation of cases of injury and death by reviewers not part of the police department, no firing into fleeing vehicles, or to unarmed fleeing people. I would like to see police education that reduces bias, and replaces training materials such as videos that show suspects, especially black and brown suspects, as dangerous enemies, to those that instruct on how to assist the community or call in community personnel to assist in non-criminal problems.

CT has set an example for the nation in other areas such as sane gun laws, and in handling Covid-19. It is time our intelligent leaders sit down and come up with solid solutions on how we can peacefully protect our communities of all colors and income levels.

Sincerely,

Janet Luongo

Norwalk, CT