

**Testimony of Jason Wasserman Support for
An Act Concerning Police Accountability, LCO #3471
July 18, 2020**

I listened to the public testimony that was held over Zoom. While I support passage of the bill with suggested changes that we heard from many of the civil rights advocates across the state, I'm not going to repeat what they said. Instead I will share some personal experience to hopefully advance the conversation.

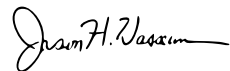
In 1969, when I was four years old, my father had a drug store, Jaivin's, on Barbour Street in the North End of Hartford. His store was burned to the ground by the community after a 16-year-old black child, Dennis Jones, was killed by a West Hartford police officer, creating frustration and resulting in civil unrest. I didn't learn the name Dennis Jones until last week when I researched what had actually happened.

It's striking to me that in 51 years, almost the span of my lifetime, not much has changed. In the last few years, I have been getting more involved with the community and learning that my experience living in Connecticut as a white man is very different from the experiences of people of color. The white people who "don't see color," can pretend we live in utopia, but we don't. As many implicit bias studies have shown, even the police officers of color who spoke yesterday may experience biases because those prejudices are so baked into our culture.

As many people said, it's not a case of a few bad apples or good apples. Casting police who harm as bad apples is too easy. It takes away the hard work and prevents us from confronting systemic racism. Why do we perpetuate a system that believes people ARE the worst thing they've ever done?

Please don't relegate the issue to a task force or another six-month committee. The most powerful testimony from yesterday was that such a demographic variety of citizens and a high number of advocacy groups stayed for hours to have their voices heard. Real people came forward who have lost family members and friends at the hands of the people who were supposed to protect us and then were left hurt by the system when they looked for some accountability. Enough is enough.

Thank you,



Jason Wasserman