

My name is Jeff Curtis and I am a member of the Stamford Board of Representatives. I write this email today as a citizen and taxpayer of Connecticut, and not as a Democratic member of the Board of Representatives.

I am deeply disappointed in the hastily constructed legislation regarding police reform as passed by the Members of the CT House.

Why we must choose either supporting the police or citizens rights? The recently passed legislation is premature and forces us to choose between the two. It is presenting two end goals as if they can't be reconciled. This reflects poor leadership in Hartford where officials lack the courage to seek out honest and reasonable solutions that can resolve inequalities while not turning our collective backs on the men and women police officers who are willing to risk their lives for us, regardless of the color of our skin. While I agree that the murder of George Floyd at the hands of bad police is terrible, and that reform is needed, and do not think this is the legislation that will achieve the desired reform.

Many years ago I had the opportunity to take part in the first Citizen's Police Academy held in Stamford. I spent one night a week for a period of 2 months learning the various procedures and issues that Stamford Police (and others as well) have to deal with on a daily basis. That included an exercise that required you to react to a video being shown and having to make a split second decision on whether to draw your weapon and shoot, or not to shoot. I can assure you it is not an easy thing to do even on a video, let alone imagine having to make that decision in real time.

I also had the opportunity to ride with Stamford Police on two shifts on the west side of Stamford. Unlike others in the academy, I chose to ride a Friday night shift (3-11) and a midnight shift (midnight to 8am) Saturday morning. Sixteen straight hours of experiencing everything from drug overdoses to shots fired calls. Let me assure you it becomes very real when you are told you have to wear a Kevlar bullet proof vest with a steel impact plate at center mass.

I have heard that other cities and states are suggesting that sending social workers out on non-violent calls, or having civilian city employees perform traffic stops to issue citations is safer than sending police. Do you know how fast a "non-violent" call can go sideways? Do you know many officers are injured, shot or killed responding to Domestic calls or performing traffic stops? The numbers are staggering and that doesn't include recent statistics of police being ambushed or killed during violent confrontations.

I urge all members of the Connecticut General Assembly to attend a Citizen's Police Academy and learn first hand what police officers deal with on a daily basis. What I learned through my experience from attending a Citizen Police Academy is the main reason, I cannot support the recently passed legislation and strongly urge you to reject this legislation.

I am not saying that there is no need for reform, there is always room for change and improvement. I am just saying that there are ways to open dialogues and make changes that everyone (even Police officers) can support. I don't think this legislation does that at all, I believe you are going to see many good police officers put in their retirement papers. That is evident nearby in New York City where applications for retirement from the NYPD have increased 450% over the number from last year. You will also find it harder to recruit new police officers to take the place of the retired officers.

I urge you to reject this hastily crafted legislation and instead allocate the proper and necessary resources to the mental health agencies throughout the state, especially in the larger municipalities. I also urge you to support and fund additional training for state and local police departments in the areas of mental health and de-escalation. Don't jeopardize police or civilian lives by passing this legislation.

Jeff Curtis
(203) 667-1228

Jeffrey Curtis
42 Deacon Hill Road
Stamford, CT 06905