

July 17, 2020

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Dear Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Ranking members Kissel and Rebimbas, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am a resident of New Haven, Connecticut, and an employee and graduate student at the University of Connecticut. I am active member of both communities, and as such, I support legislation that will make police more accountable, particularly in instances of racial profiling, police brutality, and murder committed by police. However, as the state requires more accountability from police, they should also be **divesting from** state and municipal policing, and reinvesting in communities, particularly in mental health, services, affordable housing, youth programming, elder care, and other important social services. I do not support increasing funding for municipal or state police departments. As such, I can only support this bill with crucial amendments.

I oppose the language in sections 1-4 of the proposed legislation, because it grants the police the authority to oversee themselves, and hold themselves accountable. This language should be amended to create an **independent** oversight body, free from conflicts of interests. Police departments cannot be trusted to oversee themselves, when they have committed the wrongdoing in the first place. Likewise, in sections 33-36, the current language only calls for an inspector general to investigate police use of force, but we need an **independent** prosecutor.

I also oppose the language in section 18, allowing police departments to conduct their own evaluations regarding the use of social workers. This is problematic on two fronts. Police have a conflict of interest and therefore an independent body should be responsible for this evaluation. Furthermore, any social workers should work for an independent, non-police, institution. Municipal and state police have caused great harm in poor communities and communities of color and therefore cannot be trusted to house crucial social work services, that could become another means of surveillance in those communities.

On the subject of body cameras for police, they have been proven ineffective if not accompanied by policies that provide real, independent accountability. Without such independent accountability in place, body cameras become a source of unnecessary surveillance on communities. One 2016 study found that in jurisdictions where police wear body cameras, 92.6% of prosecutors' offices used body camera footage against private citizens, while only 8.3% have used it to prosecute police officers<sup>1</sup>. The overwhelming use of body camera footage against private citizens goes against the spirit of the act in question, meant to hold police accountable, not cause more harm in our communities.

I am very appreciative to the Judiciary Committee for taking this important first step towards protecting our communities, protecting Black lives, and requiring police accountability. I sincerely hope significant amendments will be considered so that I can fully support the proposed legislation.

Sincerely,  
Jordan McMillan, PhD, MA, MSW

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<sup>1</sup> Norwood, Candace. 2020. "Body Cameras are seen as Key to Police Reform. But do They Increase Accountability?" PBS NewsHour, June 25, 2020. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/body-cameras-are-seen-as-key-to-police-reform-but-do-they-increase-accountability>