



Chairman Winfield, Chairman Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding LCO 3571- An Act Concerning Policy Accountability. My name is Julie Yale and I am the current President of the Connecticut Counseling Association (CCA).

CCA is the professional association that represents Licensed Professional Counselors, Professional Counselor Associates, and counseling graduate students here in CT. CCA is also a branch of the American Counseling Association. I am also a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in private practice in Niantic.

On behalf of CCA, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the proposed Police Accountability legislation. CCA wanted to specifically comment on Section 18 of LCO 3571. This section requires each municipal police department to evaluate the feasibility and potential impact of the department using social workers to respond to calls for assistance

**We support Section 18 and believe the utilization of behavioral health professionals would be a beneficial support to the essential work of our police force as well as the public, however, we do not believe it should be limited to social workers. Other behavioral health professionals do similar work in the community including professional counselors, alcohol and drug counselors, psychologists, marital and family therapists, and psychiatrists.**

The workforce and availability of mental health professionals in communities differs across the state so the legislation should not be limited to using social workers only. Additionally, since this is a feasibility review, it should allow flexibility for towns to determine what type of professionals may best be utilized.

Pursuant to Section 20-195aa of the CT General Statutes professional counseling means "the application, by persons trained in counseling, of established principles of psycho-social development and behavioral science to the evaluation, assessment, analysis, diagnosis and treatment of emotional, behavioral or interpersonal dysfunction or difficulties that interfere with mental health and human development. Professional counseling includes, but is not limited to, individual, group, marriage and family counseling, functional assessments for persons adjusting to a disability, appraisal, crisis intervention and consultation with individuals or groups."

This statute provides the scope of practice for counselors and overlaps with the social worker scope, pursuant to section 20-195m, which states that " 'Clinical social work' means the application, by persons trained in social work, of established principles of psychosocial development, behavior, psychopathology, unconscious motivation, interpersonal relationships and environmental stress to the evaluation, assessment, diagnosis and treatment of biopsychosocial dysfunction, disability and impairment, including mental, emotional, behavioral, developmental and addictive disorders, of individuals, couples, families or groups. 'Clinical

social work' includes, but is not limited to, counseling, psychotherapy, behavior modification and mental health consultation." Other behavioral health professional scopes also have similarities.

The scopes of practice for social workers and professional counselors are similar with both disciplines providing valuable expertise for outreach in the community. Therefore, we urge you to consider including professional counselors and other behavioral health professionals in the legislation as municipalities review the feasibility of this model. Please see the below language which provides a sample amendment to Section 18.

We thank you for your attention to this issue and are always available for further discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

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Sec. 18. (NEW) (Effective from passage) Not later than six months after the effective date of this section, each municipal police department shall complete an evaluation of the feasibility and potential impact of the use of behavioral health professionals, including but not limited to social workers and professional counselors, by the department for the purpose of remotely responding to calls for assistance, responding in person to such calls or accompanying a police officer on calls where the experience and training of [a] behavioral health professionals, including but not limited to social workers and professional counselors, could provide assistance. Such evaluation shall consider whether (1) responses to certain calls and community interactions could be managed entirely by [a] behavioral health professionals, including but not limited to social workers and professional counselors, or benefit from the assistance of such a practitioner [social worker], and (2) the municipality that the police department serves would benefit from employing, contracting with or otherwise engaging behavioral health professionals [social workers] to assist the municipal police department. The municipal police department may consider the use of mobile crisis teams or implementing a regional approach with other municipalities as part of any process to engage or further engage behavioral health professionals, including but not limited to social workers and professional counselors to assist municipal police departments. The municipal police department shall submit such evaluation immediately upon completion to the Police Officer Standards and Training Council established under section 7-294b of the general statutes