

Dear Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Karen DuBois-Walton and I live & vote in New Haven, CT. I am writing to urge you to pass LCO #3471 An Act Concerning Police Accountability (AACPA) with amendments. The fact that you have convened a special session highlights your recognition of the need for substantial and transformative reforms in this state to address racial inequities. Policing is one realm in which reform is long-overdue. True to its original roots as a tool for oppression of Blacks, policing has and continues to serve as an oppressive force in communities and this is enabled by inadequate oversight, lax use of force standards, inadequate early warning systems and more.

Despite being a professional, Black woman and leader in my community, I, too, feel the unease, anxiety and discomfort associated with the ways in which police are empowered to operate in our communities. The attention paid to this issue in the wake of well-publicized incidents of police brutality is justified. We cannot let that divert focus from the much needed reforms present in every department whether or not the abuse has reached the level of the highly publicized. These abuses exist everyday in the ways in which police have been allowed to exert their power. This bill offers an opportunity to implement needed reforms to protect our communities. Your action is needed on these matters.

This bill offers a comprehensive set of reforms that I urge you to enact.

This proposed bill includes important reforms. I ask that you include these measures to strengthen the bill further:

- **Stronger Use of Force Standard:** The bill should require that any use of deadly force is “necessary,” rather than the current standard of “objectively reasonable.” The use of force standard should include an officer’s entire engagement with a person rather than just the moment when severe or deadly force was used. Did the officer attempt to de-escalate the situation? Did the officer use force proportional to the seriousness of the situation? What led to encounter initially, and was the use of force necessary at all?
- **Inspector General Hiring & Firing:** The proposed bill includes the creation of an Inspector General to investigate incidents of police use of force, but leaves the hiring & firing of that position to the Chief State's Attorney at will; this is a conflict of interest. The Inspector General should be appointed by the Criminal Justice Commission directly.
- **Public Right to Record Police:** Ban police officers from taking cell phones or other recording devices without a person's consent or warrant. Give civilians the right to sue police departments if they take or destroy these devices without cause, as is exemplified in Colorado Law.
- **Police Failure to Record:** Even with police body & dash cameras adopted by police departments, too often use of force incidents do not get recorded. The bill should establish a rebuttable presumption that, if there is no police video recording of an incident, the officer is presumed to have used excessive force.

Do not let this moment pass without taking the necessary steps to provide enhanced and impactful police reforms. To not reform policing will make your legislative statements about racial equity nothing more than lip service. Act boldly to make transformative change. Act boldly to protect our Black communities.

Thank you for your service to our state.

Sincerely,
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Karen DuBois-Walton, Ph.D.