

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly,

My name is Kate Rivera and I live in Bridgeport, CT. I am a mother, an activist, and deeply committed to work in my community. Black Lives Matter has the entire country re-examining policing and its connection to racism in the United States. The bill *An Act Concerning Police Accountability* (AACPA) draws on this political energy but has some points that are out of touch with the reality of policing in Connecticut and across the country.

*Defund Police* has become the rallying cry of organizers and activists who believe Black Lives Matter. This bill does not defund the police in Connecticut. Instead, it proposes measures that may ultimately put more money in police departments. Cell phone footage, body cameras, and dashboard cameras have been used to show the world the violence of police, and very few officers have been held accountable as a result. As protests ignite across the country and our state, we still await true accountability for the officers who killed George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and far too many others. In Connecticut, we await justice for the officers who killed Mubarak Soulemane, Zoe Dowdell, Jayson Negron, and dozens of others in the past five years alone.

The presence or absence of video evidence hasn't made a difference in whether or not officers who kill people in our communities walk free or even lose their job. On the surface, body cameras and dashboard cameras seem like a good idea, but what difference has watching so many people die made so far? What has the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) done to stop police violence from happening instead of just showing us how often it happens? What data does the CGA have that suggests the reforms they're proposing are effective? How can you all contribute to being a part of the solution instead of just adding another expensive band-aid to the problem?

The demand to defund the police is one that seeks to reinvest in our communities. Violence results when people are not able to meet their basic needs, when violence is done to them, when they are traumatized, or when their mental health needs are being misinterpreted. Laws that improve accountability measures for police, but don't focus on improving the conditions that cause people to commit crimes in the first place will never solve the problem. Defunding the police in Connecticut is a necessary, progressive commitment toward achieving that goal.

Thank you,

Kate Rivera  
Bridgeport, CT