

TESTIMONY TO THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
WITH COMMENTS ON  
DRAFT LCO #3471 AN ACT CONCERNING POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY  
JULY 17, 2020

Good afternoon members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Kenya Overton, and quite frankly I am no one of any great importance. I am just Connecticut resident and educator who has witnessed the lack of police accountability first-hand and through my lens of my students. Therefore, I feel obligated to express my opinions on this piece of legislation. And, I'm going to do it concisely and in true teacher fashion at any parent/teacher conference...tell you what was done well and what needs attention.

Sections 21 and 22, requiring police officers to have probable cause to search motor vehicles and pedestrians, are well done. My students have often relayed stories to me of being searched for simply walking or driving down streets in neighborhoods where "they didn't belong". These arbitrary interactions can and has led to negative outcomes. We know what happened in the case of Travon Martin. Section 30, creating a duty of officers to intervene when fellow colleagues are not acting appropriately, is another great addition to the bill. As an educator, I have the responsibility to report any child abuse at the hands of my colleagues and police officers should be held to the same standard. What happened with George Floyd, well...enough said. Finally, Sections 40 and 41 are just necessary. Thank you for having the foresight to include those items in this bill.

Although there are many sections that need work, we will concentrate on one, Section 19. Body and dash cameras should be on whenever an officer is interacting with a civilian. This ensures that civilian rights are being adhered to and maintains a record of accountability by the officer. My dear friend's brother was fatally shot by an officer during a traffic stop because the gun "accidentally went off". No cameras, no witnesses. And, although, I cannot imagine how or why the officer's gun was drawn in the first place, dash and body cameras would have given those answers. Back when this happened, we did not have the technology that we do today. Now that we have it, it must be utilized. This multi-million-dollar investment must have standards. The police need to comply with footage and data of their interactions with civilians. Therefore, this section should have a stronger statement. Any instance where the cameras are turned off, should result in an obstruction of justice charge to the officer. If we are truly holding police accountable, this is the step we must take.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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