



TOWN OF STRATFORD

July 21, 2020

Co-Chairs Winfield and Stafstrom, Ranking Members Kissell and Rebimbus and members of the Judiciary Committee:

Re: Police Accountability Draft LCO 3471

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Police Accountability Draft LCO 3471. I appreciate the time you have invested to positively affect the operations of law enforcement in the State of Connecticut. The draft language if passed will result in many unintended consequences.

In Stratford we are fortunate to have excellent police leadership, current and past, that has afforded us good communication between chiefs and officers and the community. We have worked hard to provide community policing that is open and transparent to the public while also protecting the community. I support police accountability—the majority of our police officers work diligently to protect our town and those that do not need to be removed from the position they hold. We have established a robust Police Activities League (PAL) program and Police Engagement Program (PEP) and Calm Cool Comply (CCC) that is an elective in POST curriculum. I need to urge you not to damage the good work municipalities have accomplished with a bill that will negatively affect towns and cities and their police forces.

There are sections of the draft that are very good. I support sections 3 & 15-16 — MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS FOR POLICE OFFICERS, 19 & 20 — BODY CAMERAS, DASHBOARD CAMERAS, AND RELATED GRANTS.

I am concerned with Sections 29 & 41 and ask you to remove these sections from the bill. It is important to recognize that Connecticut has already taken significant steps in modifying its use of force provisions and the bill limits the police officers ability to use deadly force when warranted.

Governmental immunity must be recognized. The financial implications could be significant and an unjust burden on taxpayers in increased insurance costs and/or judgements. Under current law police officers do not have absolute immunity and can be held liable when they violate a clearly established constitutional right. This provides balance between the rights of individuals to hold police officers liable under certain circumstances and the need of law enforcement officers to make split-second decisions under very stressful and dangerous circumstances while protecting the communities they serve.

Sincerely,

Laura R. Hoydick
Mayor, Town of Stratford