

To: Members of the Judiciary Committee
From: Lauren Garrett
Date: July 19, 2020
Re: LCO 3471, An Act Concerning Police Accountability

Dear Chairmen Winfield, Chairmen Stafstrom, Ranking Members and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in support of LCO 3471, An Act Concerning Police Accountability. I watched the public hearing on Friday and witnessed disgusting racism used to make an argument against Police Accountability. A racist resident compared our cities to plantations. A ranking member on the Judiciary Committee compared 400 years of slavery, segregation, and oppression to the Irish potato famine. This is the exact reason we need strong police accountability laws. Racism exists in our society in every system and in every way. If officers cannot be trusted to act in just ways because they have no value for black lives, then perhaps they will act in just ways to protect their bank account.

On Saturday evening, we witnessed the backlash of a small reduction to the police department and the support for Black Lives Matter when the police department in Hamden refused to answer a 911 call for 15 minutes. A young man lay dying in the street because of unanswered 911 calls for 15 minutes! When an officer finally showed up he told the family to talk to Justin Farmer and blamed budget cuts. We need more ways to hold the police accountable, not less. Policing was started to round up runaway slaves. Centuries later, we haven't come that far. Police departments continue to protect and serve capitalism and white supremacy while looting resources from our black and brown communities.

Please do not remove the language on qualified immunity. This is the strongest portion of the bill. Establishing civilian review boards in all our municipalities would allow us to hold police accountable in our communities. Please grant us subpoena powers for the CRB. I want to see more social workers on the ground, but would rather they not be tied to the police department or work within their budget. Our police departments need to be demilitarized. Protect and serve should not look like weapons of war. We do not need more funding for police departments. Officers in Hamden average over \$130,000 per year, with some officers making \$230,000 per year. We need to invest in mental health, education, economic development, etc. I implore you to pass LCO 3471. Our state must take these actions because we know there will be another black life lost. This bill will enable families to get justice.

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Respectfully Submitted,
Lauren Garrett
Hamden, CT