

I am former state senator Len Suzio. I am testifying today on the so-called Police Accountability Bill, LCO No. 3471. I only wish the Legislature would show a similar sense of urgency with respect to the state's failed "Early Release" program which has prematurely discharged more than 40,000 convicted felons who have committed more than 15,000 violent crimes following their early discharge from Connecticut prisons. The situation is all the more outrageous because the Department of Correction is flouting PA 15-216 which requires the reporting of crimes committed by prisoners after early discharge from Connecticut correction facilities. Compassion for victims of violent crime should be on par with the subject of today's proposed legislation.

Like millions of Americans, I witnessed the video of the coldblooded killing of George Floyd. It was shocking and disgusting to watch how cold and indifferent the police officer appeared as he slowly squeezed the life out of Mr. Floyd. The overwhelming public response was outrage. People of all races participated in protest rallies, which is testimony that racism is not systemic or widespread as claimed by some politicians.

Most people know that the overwhelming number of police men and police women are not racist. The isolated acts of individual officers are not indicative of systemic racism in our police forces. Such an accusation is slander against the tens of thousands of men and women in blue (many of whom are people of color) who put their lives on the line to make our communities safer and do so without engaging in racist actions.

The proposed legislation appears to have some questionable elements, some of which I express herein:

- The prohibition against military equipment includes equipment such as night vision goggles. This makes no sense. Night vision goggles do not kill anyone. Today criminals themselves have access to such equipment. Why should our officers be denied equipment that can help them in confrontations with potentially armed criminals?
- The requirement that towns must acquire body cameras even if they do not receive a grant to pay for them is another uncompensated state mandate that will burden our already overburdened cities and towns
- The potential requirement for officers to pay for and maintain professional liability insurance is almost certain to be passed on to cities and towns and could be another expensive unfunded mandate.
- Terminology in the bill appears vague. Terms such as "primary traffic violation" do not appear to be defined

This issue is too important and the emotions of the moment too strong to pass immediate legislation that could adversely affect the safety of the men and women who risk their lives to protect law-abiding citizens. This is something that will take time to do it right – for the benefit of everyone.

Len Suzio

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