

To Whom It May Concern,

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

Every day and night, the nearly 7,000 law enforcement officers that serve the citizens of Connecticut toe the line that separates civilized society from lawlessness. These men and women patrol your streets and neighborhoods in order to keep the “wolf” at bay. The overwhelming majority of those who do so serve without discrimination as to class, color creed or condition, and without fear or favor. Over the past few decades and beyond, the State of Connecticut has been no stranger to senseless acts of violence persecuted against its citizens by those who have no respect for the life or liberty of their fellow man. During this time period, the men and women of Connecticut law enforcement have run fearlessly into the doors of the Sandy Hook Elementary School and Hartford Distributors Inc, and The Connecticut Lottery Headquarters, and charged fearlessly down I-95 towards lower Manhattan on September 11th 2001 to assist with rescue, relief, and recovery efforts following terrorist attacks; just to name a few instances.

Amidst recent events in Minneapolis and across the United States, the Connecticut General Assembly has introduced LCO #3471; An Act Concerning Police Accountability. Never before has such a detrimental bill to law enforcement been introduced and considered. If put into law, the citizens of the State will undoubtedly be placed in danger; as law enforcement will lose crucial tools necessary to combat the criminals that victimize the innocent members of our society.

Surely, this bill contains several reasonable proposals that may serve to increase the quality of police service that our citizens deserve. As a matter of fact, some of the proposals contained within this bill have already become implemented policy in many Connecticut law enforcement agencies. However, between the lines of this bill are several dangerous proposals that serve to restrict the manner in which Connecticut police can pro-actively enforce the laws of this State.

For example, language in this bill prohibits the search of a motor vehicle or person, even with the consent of the operator or person. Each year, thousands of illegal firearms as well as illegal narcotics are removed from the streets of our communities based upon consent searches of vehicles or persons. Reducing a police officer’s ability to utilize the consent of a motor vehicle operator to conduct a search of a motor vehicle or person severely jeopardizes law enforcement’s ability to remove dangerous guns and drugs from our city streets.

The bill also calls for the ban of “controlled military equipment”. Such equipment is utilized by law enforcement in order to resolve high risk situations involving active shooters, barricaded subjects, or hostage situations all too often, and often times out of the public eye. The vast majority of the time, such equipment allows law enforcement to resolve these highly volatile and dangerous situations without the loss of life, due to the safety and non-lethal options that they provide. If the use of this equipment is banned, I believe that you will find that the most

highly qualified and capable of our State's law enforcement will be unwilling to voluntarily put themselves into the most dangerous of situations that a police officer may encounter.

However, most concerning to the men and women of law enforcement is the call for elimination of qualified immunity. Established through decades of State and Federal case law, qualified immunity shields a law enforcement officer acting in his or her official capacity from lawsuits, as long as they do so in accordance with state, local, and federal law, and within the confines of their training and experience. Qualified immunity DOES NOT offer protection to police who use excessive force, or who are found to be in violation of the law. In a profession where seconds count, and police must make life or death decisions in fractions of a second, eliminating qualified immunity will force the brave police officers who serve our communities to act with hesitation and doubt, therefore inadvertently placing themselves and others in physical danger. Police simply do not have the luxury to pause and rewind a video dozens of times during a physical encounter with a resisting subject in order to determine if their actions are the best option available at the time, as much of society does.

Additionally, this will completely eliminate the police officer's desire to conduct proactive police work, such as combating street crime or enforcing motor vehicle violations. This is because police officers will be unwilling to needlessly expose themselves to the potential liability that comes with every interaction. Every traffic stop or call for service conducted by a police officer may result in a frivolous lawsuit that may remove the roof from over their family's heads. As a result, the crime rate in Connecticut will increase exponentially, along with traffic crash fatalities. I do not believe any reasonable person, regardless of profession, would be willing to take such a risk. And therefore I ask of you, the proposers of this legislation; how gravely would your job performance be effected if you knew that any action that you were trained and paid to do, even if conducted in good faith and in accordance with the law, could result in you being held personally liable?

Recently, statistics released by the Connecticut State Police reveal that Connecticut State Troopers used force in 0.02% in a total of 468,469 contacts with the public in 2019, with the vast majority of these uses of force being justified under Connecticut and United States Law. The media narrative that police are patrolling the streets and unlawfully murdering citizens at an alarming rate is completely false. Any review of statistics compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation will confirm this. As compared to surrounding states and entities, Connecticut already leads the way in terms of quality of police training offered. However, additional training for Connecticut law enforcement has been sacrificed in the name of budgetary concerns; as training has been reduced across the board for the fear of the overtime that it creates. Furthermore, Connecticut is already struggling to recruit qualified police applicants. As a result, police departments must make sacrifices regarding their hiring standards in order to fill their ranks. If you want to produce the quality of police officer that the citizens of Connecticut deserve, we must increase hiring standards, as well as the quantity and quality of training that is offered to police.

We must remember that law enforcement officers are human, and therefore inherently, they are imperfect; like all of us. As years go by, police are tasked with more and more responsibilities, which adds to the confusion in the work that we expect them to complete in the same amount of time, and with less resources; and with increasing resistance from the general public. Due to these daily frustrations, and along with the introduction of this bill, I have spoken to dozens of Connecticut law enforcement officers who stated that they will consider either quitting the profession, or completely eliminating pro-active contact with the public while on the job. Their desire to protect and serve the State of Connecticut and the citizens of its municipalities is outweighed by the additional civil and criminal liabilities as leveraged by this bill. By even the most conservative of estimates, and inclusive of scheduled retirements, the total number of Connecticut State Troopers that patrol our rural towns and highways will be decreased by approximately 50% by the year 2022. That number will only increase if this bill is passed.

If you need an example of this, you do not have to look very far. Recently, aggressive and misinformed “police reform” based upon false narratives has led to over a 400% increase in retirements in the New York City Police Department. Additionally, members of the New York State Police have asked that they be removed from New York City, as they do not want to be needlessly exposed to the additional civil and criminal liability that has been created by local government. This is all occurring while violent crime and murder have sky rocketed within the city as compared to this time last year.

In a time where the citizens of the State of Connecticut are plagued by a surge in property crime in their neighborhoods overnight, and violent crimes and murders are being persecuted against innocent citizens in our communities on a daily basis, this bill will be absolutely devastating to law enforcement, and will serve to mark the end to justice for victims as we know it. Therefore, and in conclusion, you must say “no” to this bill, and it’s dangerous anti-justice rhetoric. Please think of all the victims of crime who will not see justice served if this bill is passed when preparing to cast your vote. As previously stated, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil, is for good men to do nothing,” and with the dangerous passage of LCO #3471; An Act Concerning Police Accountability, you can expect exactly that; good police will do nothing, evil will triumph in the State of Connecticut, and dangerous criminals will roam the streets unopposed.

Respectfully Submitted,

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