

I am writing this letter as a fifteen year law enforcement officer who is gravely concerned about the state of our state and nation at this time. As we continue to push forward at a remarkable pace to change and alter a profession that a small minority seem to feel has problems I would like to ask why this needs to move in such haste. There are problems in every profession and I urge those involved in the decisions facing the change that is being brought upon us to stop and look at what is going on around us. What you will see is lawlessness and that is not what I want my family or yours living amongst. Look at what is going on in New Haven , Connecticut and the surrounding areas right now. You have gang wars going on. This is not normal behavior that people living in these areas should have to deal with.

The people in these areas deserve better. They deserve a proactive police force that will defend them and stand up for what is right. To those of you reading this letter, I want you to know that much of my police career was working undercover narcotics and illegal weapons cases within the larger cities throughout Connecticut. I lost count of how many times we would work on long term cases and sieze large amounts of weapons, narcotics or in most cases both weapons and narcotics out of homes. While collecting evidence, the families in the area would come and thank us for the job well done. They would tell us how they were too fearful to speak up and call police for fear of retaliation. They were elated and relieved that they had a focused police force with a mission for service and justice. What I see going on right now is a crippled nation listening to a boisterous minority rather than the true voice of the people of the State of Connecticut or that of the nation. It's the silent majority we have yet to hear from. Well let me explain that the silent majority is speaking volumes. They are dropping off cards and banners at the department saying they appreciate us. Catering meals and dropping them off anonymously at the stations, they are organizing law enforcement breakfasts at places of worship so we know the community appreciates us while the "few" have lost their minds. I want everyone to wake up a bit.

My family has experienced loss such as the recent events in our country. I lost one of the best friends I ever had to police brutality, my cousin Ryan O'Loughlin. He and I were first cousins and did a lot together such as rode motocross and played sports and snow boarded together. He was 34 years old and a veteran of our country much like many of the law enforcement officers in this state. I will spare most of the details but he was trying to stop officers in Westerly Rhode Island from arresting a man that caused damage to a bathroom within a local bar since my cousin and the owner of the bar were friends and he knew the owner did not want to pursue charges for the damage. Prior to the owner coming out and stopping the officers from arresting the man who caused the damage, my cousin interjected and told them there was no need to make an arrest. When he did so, an officer struck him in the face and he was taken into an alley by law enforcement. After he returned from the alley he was arrested. He was visibly swollen and appeared to have been beaten. When he was arraigned, he told the judge that several officers were responsible for fighting with him. Upon his release from court he asked his wife to take him to the hospital where he died in the Mystic Emergency Room. This case dragged on for years for my family and was never made all that public. I believe the only publicity made from this was a "Justice For Ryan" forum that began. If you research his name you will see some more of the details but my point in this was not to bore you with the details of the past but to prove a point. My cousin was a white male and there was no political agenda behind it. It was tragic and it was done by officers within the Westerly Rhode Island Police Department that do not deserve to wear a badge. Those officers never did lose their jobs though. I, however, attended on a yearly basis trainings held in Newport Rhode Island with fellow officers from surrounding states and municipalities. One of the departments in attendance was Westerly and I began to feel disgusted with them until I had to be reminded by my supervisor that we cannot paint the whole department with a broad brush and that the officers in attendance from that department may not have been the same ones involved with my cousin's death. I immediately changed my disposition and turned the other cheek, acting as a professional in agreeance with my supervisor. The whole department should not be tainted because of the actions of a few. The reason I tell this story is because If I can do this act of turning the other cheek, acting as a professional then the rest of the world should too. This movement sweeping Connecticut to "reform law enforcement is no different than the "knee jerk reaction" I almost had when I was immediately disgusted that Westerly Rhode Island was in attendance at the same training I was. I could have easily went over to any one of them and voiced my opinion. It would have felt good for the first five minutes and then I would've looked foolish. I'm hoping the state and the nation can do the same and "turn the other cheek" before they too make a "knee jerk reaction" in making a decision in haste without the real vote of the public or wishes of the public and look foolish.

This bill you are about to pass has many detriments for law enforcement as a whole. It affects tax payers negatively and municipalities alike. It will hurt the officers morale, causing a decline in productivity due to fear of litigation and it was ultimately hurt the private citizen expecting a level of service from the departments.

First and foremost, many people with a financial gain standing behind this bill to include Axon, Lenco, civil attorneys and the like. These entities stand everything to gain. With removal of the 1033 program you will prevent any municipality from gaining the benefit of equipment that the government no longer can utilize. This equipment

then has to be purchased by the municipalities or state to include armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition. This is where a company such as Lenco stands everything to gain. They currently do not make money off many municipalities or state agencies involved in the 1033 program because most departments are able to obtain armored vehicles for tactical operations from the government when they are no longer in use. People label these vehicles as too militaristic due to size but they are carrying ARMOR which makes them heavy. This extremely heavy armor requires a large chassis and wheel base to carry it. I know this from my past experience as a mechanic in the United States Army. These armored vehicles are not only used to protect the officers but they are a means to evacuate civilians if and when an active shooter situation, hostage situation or similar takes place. We have had many of these incidences take place recently and I pray they are not forgotten too soon. Many of these incidences include the Las Vegas Shootings, Sandy Hook, Hartford Distributors Shooting and most recently, the Manfredonia case to name a few. If the government cannot supply this equipment the local tax payers will bear the burden of raised taxes to pay for this purchase through Lenco.

As far as Axon goes, they are the major vendor for police video right now which is incorporated through Taser International. With the cry for more video and having them integrated with Tasers as well as vehicles and officer body cameras it surely will create a cost burden for municipalities and states alike. With the addition of body cameras since Freddy Gray was killed law enforcement officers are being exonerated from citizen complaints showing officers acted professionally. It helps with court cases and provides better evidence when those involved in criminal activity complain about the officer or mislead the court system as to what took place during an incident they were involved in. Law enforcement officers do not have an issue wearing them but the expense to keep these programs is astronomical costing nearly \$80,000 yearly per department to store the digital video. There would be so many more useful ways to spend this money such as capital improvements or lower taxes to name a few.

The civil attorneys are just standing behind this bill waiting for qualified immunity to be removed so the litigious society Connecticut has at the current time will continue to get worse. The lawsuits will line their pockets and officers will not want to do their jobs in fear of this. These officers have families and just as every other citizen goes to work in order to put food on the table and send their children to school, officers are no different. This will cause officers to refrain from being involved in more than they need to such as proactive work for fear of being sued and their family suffering if they were to lose their employment. This will surely trickle down to lack of qualified employees. There will be less applicants since the profession will also no longer be sought after with all the risk. These officers are asked to make decisions that most people in the world are not able to do or we as police officers would never get called. The calls for service we answer sometimes are, "I heard a thud in my basement, I'd like it checked", which is a true call for service which occurred in my career. If a grown male cannot check his own residence for a thud how can you tell me that same grown male, who may be trying to pass this bill through knows anything about a deadly encounter with an armed suspect or struggling with a suspect of a serious crime and what we as police should or shouldn't do. The man cannot even check his own home for a noise!. I have been injured badly on the job. I tore my pectoral muscle off my shoulder struggling with a suspect which causes me pain daily but it's the sacrifices we have made for the public. I did the same in the service as did many others before me as well as my grandparents and many of your families who served were injured and paid a sacrifice. We cannot start turning our great country into a divide. We are one and should not be disrespecting flags and kneeling, knocking over statues or making "knee jerk" reactions by passing this bill. It will hurt everything in the future to include how crime is handled. Crime will go up, the large companies will have everything to gain financially and officers and their families will be vulnerable along with society who will be left to largely their own devices.

All while my cousin's homicide case carried on my family did not act like criminals and tear down statues, loot, injure innocent people in disgust. We let the judicial system prevail. It failed my family, however, we cannot change from innocent until proven guilty to guilty until proven innocent as we are currently heading. Police officers are being fired and arrested immediately to appease a vocal minority public emboldening the masses of criminals and opportunists to flourish. We cannot let this play out this way any longer. All lives matter. Let's stop segregating ourselves by picking which ones matter. My children, your children, African American children, Asian children, ALL children and families with any race, color or creed deserve to go to school in peace and walk through the streets without being fearful of crime. Let us do our jobs seeing as though we don't come to your door step and tell you how to do yours. We will keep the streets safe. We will protect the night while you sleep soundly. We will make sure that noise is checked. All we ask is give us the support, confidence and freedom to do it! We cannot do it without qualified immunity. We cannot do it without the public trust. It's everything President Obama asked for in his Task Force on 21st Century Policing. He wanted procedural justice. The community needs to see us as professionals and understand it's a fair system of justice before they allow us as police officers to enforce the laws. We will no longer have any community involvement if the divide keeps being widened by the media and governmental "knee Jerk" reactions. If you have any questions please contact me as I am willing to answer any you may have. Thank you for your time.

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