

July 16, 2020

Dear Judiciary Committee members,

Regarding police accountability changes you will take up in the Special Session, these points are most essential in my view:

- Stronger Use of Force Standard: The bill should require that any use of deadly force is “necessary,” rather than the current standard of “objectively reasonable.” The use of force standard should include an officer’s entire engagement with a person rather than just the moment when severe or deadly force was used. Did the officer attempt to de-escalate the situation? Did the officer use force proportional to the seriousness of the situation? What led to encounter initially, and was the use of force necessary at all?
- Disciplinary Records Subject to Freedom of Information Laws: this would keep officers accountable to residents of town/city where they’re currently employed, and prevent or at least reduce the possibility of “bad actors” being employed by other jurisdictions that previously didn’t have a way to know about complaints against the officer.
- Police Failure to Record: Even with police body & dash cameras adopted by police departments, too often use of force incidents do not get recorded. The bill should establish a rebuttable presumption that, if there is no police video recording of an incident, the officer is presumed to have used excessive force.
- Also, the legislation you are considering should also cover correction officers in the state’s criminal justice system.

Sincerely,

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