



Testimony in Support LCO No. 3471: An Act Concerning Police Accountability

**Submitted by, Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate
Southern New England Conference United Church of Christ
July 16, 2020**

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate for the Southern New England Conference United Church of Christ and I am writing today in support of LCO #3471, An Act Concerning Police Accountability.

I am writing on behalf of the 614 congregations and more than 120,000 people in our state's churches. In fact, the United Church of Christ (UCC) is the largest Protestant denomination in Connecticut. Nationally, the UCC has more than 5,700 congregations with nearly 1 million members. In 2014 the assembled delegates and ministers of the historic Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ met and voted on a Resolution that called upon the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ to call for an end to Mass Incarceration for Non-Violent Offenses, to advocate for passage of legislation that promotes alternatives to mass incarceration, and to support racial and economic justice in criminal sentencing and restorative justice principles in all possible circumstances.

Holding police accountable is important and we must extend this to correctional officers as well. Prisons disproportionately incarcerate black and brown people. In Connecticut, seventy-one percent of the people in prison are black and brown. Also we support a more independent appointee of Inspector General than from the State's Attorney's office. This is not independent oversight since prosecutors work closely with police officers.

The bill's focus on banning practices that inflict trauma and unnecessary violence is well warranted. We need an unequivocal ban on chokeholds, even in the Department of Correction. Chokeholds are not safe and should not be used. There are safer holds and escort techniques that do not endanger the life of a person. These must be taught in training and practiced instead. Also, the bill should ban solitary confinement, an ineffective practice often understood to be torture, which can inflict life long trauma.

All of God's children deserve an opportunity to work, obtain housing, healthcare, etc, therefore the bill must explicitly shift funding from policing into communities of color and to invest in resources for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Thank you for your work and the opportunity to supply written testimony for this bill.

Blessings,

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