

Testimony by Owen Lee to the Judiciary Committee
Regarding LCO 3471

Good afternoon Co-Chairs Senator Winfield and Rep. Stafstrom. My name is Owen Lee and I am an Investigator in the Special Services Division for the Norwalk Police Department. Special Services handles narcotics, gangs organized, crime, prostitution, and human trafficking among other responsibilities. I also served in the Marines on active duty for 9 years and the Navy Reserve for 5 years. Working in the Special Services Division brings a sense of pride when we do our work. When we take guns off the street, or solve a major drug case, or stop human trafficking, it feels like we've done something quantifiable for the community we serve.

The proposed legislation, LCO 3471, has many concerning changes about the working conditions and rights of police officers:

In **Section 12**, a task force is created to study various issues related to police officers and policing. However, within their charge is to study the necessity or requirement of a police officer at road construction sites within a municipality. This part seems to have little relation to police accountability and transparency. Police officers are necessary at road construction sites because we provide an extra layer of safety to road construction which is already a job with risks. Without police officers there, as well as police cars, there is no deterrent to a driver continuing to drive at higher rates of speed. When drivers see the police car and police officer they naturally slow down which makes everyone safer.

Section 12 also studies the merits and feasibility of requiring police officers to obtain professional liability insurance as a condition of employment. This would add additional costs to one specific sector of workers and immediately reduce the number of police officers. It is an additional burden that would specifically be placed on police officers that is not placed on other workers.

Section 41 repeals qualified immunity for the police officers who protect our communities. Police officers are already not protected by qualified immunity if they take discretionary actions that are found to be wanton and willful. Information in the media make it seem like qualified immunity is all-covering which is untrue. It provides a standard protection for police officers when there are situations that are ambiguous and potentially unclear as the situations we respond too are almost always fluid. This could also lead to mandating police officers personally to obtain liability insurance which would be costly and prohibitive. I urge the committee to oppose the removal of qualified immunity for police officers.

Thank you hearing my concerns.