

Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I've emailed this committee several times already with only a single response.

I am writing once again this time to have my testimony on the record

I'm a retired police officer who is a lifelong resident of CT. I have been engaged in many physical confrontations with combative subjects and have had to use legal force in order to affect arrests and to prevent people from harming myself or others. I have had a firearm discharged at me which thankfully missed and I have suffered other injuries such as cuts, bites and many others. I understand the implications of some of the proposals that you have placed in this bill.

I have reviewed the "police accountability" bill which is moving forward and while I found that there are some proposals which I believe have merit in attaining your stated goals, there are some items which I don't see as related consent search bans and continuing task force discussions around police at road jobs. These items do not belong in this conversation. But, most importantly, there are some areas which I view as problematic from an officer safety standpoint.

The "duty to intervene" section and language is subjective and warns of potential criminal action under circumstances which are often violent and occurring in a compressed time frame. The potential for officers to freeze or react slowly trying while trying to determine the appropriateness and "legality" of their actions may potentially cause injury or death to the officers. I don't expect many of you have ever been involved in a physical attempt to take a combative person into custody and this proposal shows that. It is potentially very dangerous to officers.

Changes to the reasoning or justification to the use of force to a more restrictive standard may also have the effect of causing officers to hesitate under circumstances where they may not be able to. The current standard (Graham standard) is reasonable and has been in place for years. Changing this long held standard to one which is more restrictive and once again subjective will increase the odds that an officer hesitates while making a decision. With the potential of unclear criminal consequences, or a decertification by POST placed into the decision continuum, the end result may very well be an injured or dead officer.

The last objection I have is to any consideration of the elimination of "qualified immunity" for officers. The courts have recognized for many years that public employees and I would add particularly police officers often have to make decisions in circumstances that are chaotic and violent and without the benefit of consultation with peers or supervision. Because of this, as long as the officers were acting within the scope of their duties and were acting with good faith, they were protected from civil recourse. They can still be sued for wanton or negligent acts which violate people's rights. The removal of immunity will have a devastating effect on policing in general. Officer will be prone to hesitation which in many cases they cannot afford. Pro-active policing will cease. Citizens will end up being less safe and crime will rise once criminals realize that the legislature has paved the way for them to ply their trade on the law abiding citizens of CT who will end up being the real victims of this legislation.

To summarize:

The items I have pointed out will increase the danger to police officers. They will decrease public safety in general and they will increase the overall crime rate. Police Officers work tirelessly to make our society safer. They deserve your respect. Instead they get this proposed legislation which will potentially harm them. Their job is made untenable and virtually impossible to perform safely. Their career and their families' financial well being are threatened.

I have been out of policing for over 14 years now. I am disappointed and sickened by much of this proposal.

I want this on the record.

The path you have apparently chosen to pursue is one which will potentially harm police officers and decrease overall public safety.

I cannot watch this attack on officers and their safety and stay silent.

I will not.

v/r

Paul Aurelia
Stratford, CT