



BOSTON-HARTFORD DISTRICT

NEW ENGLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

First Episcopal District

African Methodist Episcopal Church

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Reverend Jocelyn Kahn Hart Lovelace, Presiding Elder

July 17, 2020

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Reverend Janine A. Dailey
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People's, Chelsea

Reverend Dr. Gwendolyn Wrighten-Montgomery
Bethel Community

Reverend Gloria Harris Cater, Ph.D.
Malden Mission

Reverend Mariama White-Hammond
New Roots

The Honorable Gary A. Winfield, Co-Chair
The Honorable Steven J. Stafstrom, Co-Chair
The Joint Committee on Judiciary
Connecticut State Legislature
300 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: Pass the Police Accountability Act

Dear Sen. Winfield and Rep. Stafstrom:

I am the Presiding Elder of the Boston-Hartford District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the oldest black denomination in the world. The Boston-Hartford District consists of 25 congregations and 7,000+ members of A.M.E. churches in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

On Wednesday, July 15, the pastors of the nine A.M.E. churches in Connecticut, representing the 3,000+ parishioners in their congregations, stood on the steps of the State Capital to push for the passage of this legislation. Some of the pastors have already submitted written testimony for today's hearing; others will be testifying before the Joint Committee today. All agree that this bill must become law, for there must be greater accountability within the police forces across the state.

Sadly, 21 people have lost their lives because of police related violence in the past five years, including four in 2020 alone. Twenty-one families are trying to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic even as they struggle to make sense of why their relative died at the hands of police. Twenty-one families are coping with the loss of a loved one at every birthday, anniversary, graduation and wedding. There are 21 fewer place settings at the Thanksgiving table; 21 fewer hugs on Mother's Day, Father's Day and other holidays; 21 funerals too many because of police violence.

The murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police sparked a flame that engulfed the entire world. We all watched in horror the life being taken from him in 8 minutes, 46 seconds by the knee of one who swore to protect and serve him. Our hearts collectively broke as George Floyd repeatedly declared "I can't breathe" and called for his mother as he took his last breaths.

The citizens of Connecticut, especially residents in communities of color, are collectively declaring "I can't breathe." The families of the 21 people who died are *breathless* with sadness and heartache. We demand that you and your colleagues to *breathe life* into this police accountability legislation and nurture this measure until it becomes law.

Letter to Joint Committee on Judiciary Co-Chairs

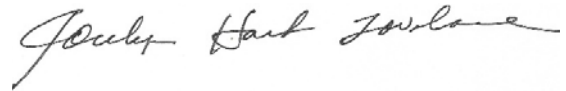
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Initiatives like the ones proposed in this bill arguably could have prevented George Floyd's death. Initiatives like the ones proposed in this bill may well have prevented the agony that 21 families in Connecticut are experiencing right now. Your passage of this legislation may prevent your son, your daughter, your neighbor, your constituents from suffering a similar fate.

Pass this legislation and do it expeditiously; we are counting on all of you to do in order that we may *breathe again*.

Yours in Christian Service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jocelyn K. Hart Lovelace". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Rev. Jocelyn K. Hart Lovelace
Presiding Elder