

TESTIMONY CONCERNING BILL LOC 3471 *An Act Considering Police Accountability*

Prepared by Robert J. Gillis, New Haven July 16, 2020

TO: Members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary

I am writing in general support of the bill referenced above, but I have several caveats which I wish to present briefly:

1. I am retired after 36 years of service to the Department of Correction. During the final 18 years of my career I served as Warden at 3 different facilities and, finally, as Director of Parole and Community Services. I am currently a member of the Steering Committee of *Stop Solitary CT*(SSCT). Our focus initially was directed to the abolition of solitary confinement in all of its designations, and we propose the closing of Northern Correctional Institution. Our emphasis has broadened to police accountability. This expansion of scope prompts my comments here. We have not relinquished our efforts relative to solitary, but we recognize the tight agenda for the upcoming special session.
2. My years of service have demonstrated to me a number of situations in which correctional personnel acted improperly and in the absence of effective supervision.
3. The bill under consideration centers on police accountability. Some references in the language suggest that staff of the DOC would also be subject to provisions similar to those applicable to police officers and law enforcement agencies. Lines 1199 through 1286 seem to suggest that a person who is “an authorized official of the Department of Correction” has certain powers which are likely to occur in community settings.
4. Performance in institutional situations, on the other hand, does not appear to be subject to the conditions in the draft. Excessive use of force, for example, could possibly take place and would not be subject to provisions of the bill absent a fatal result—an event the consequences of which are adequately addressed by the bill.

In consideration of the intent of the bill and the status of the Department of Correction as an agency which is totally under the control of state government, I advance the position that effective accountability for correctional practice, performance, and policy should be included as a separate component to the bill. Our Department of Correction is one of very few correctional agencies nationwide not subject to a formally-constituted channel of oversight.

Thank you.