

I support LCO #3471, "An Act Concerning Police Accountability."

I believe that the bill helps to ensure policing aligns with our belief in equal justice under the law and strengthens the structures that reinforce the partnership of the police with the community. Our society is stronger and safer when the police, and the public are engaged partners.

The legislation also creates structures and processes that help to change the culture of the police. I endorse the ban on chokeholds in all but life-threatening scenarios, granting civilian review boards with subpoena power, and establishing an inspector general to investigate misconduct.

That said, I hope the legislature recognizes that the vast majority of police choose their vocation because they are willing to put their lives in "harm's way" because they want to serve society, create a safe world, and have that personal satisfaction when a small child comes to them and says "I am lost." We will always need police who want to serve for those reasons – we need to make sure that people entering the workforce see those opportunities because they are the officers we need for our future.

There are many details in this legislation that I do not understand or have not had the time to digest. But I fervently hope that there are required resources for training the police in the science of policing and navigating highly dangerous and stressful situations. There also needs to be leadership training for the leaders of the force on how to lead in our highly complex and difficult society. As my friends in the Navy SEALs note, "the level of performance often reflects the level of training."

One point that seems to be missing from the legislation is a lack of due process for the officer. Justice demands that the aggrieved be able to make their case and that the accused also be treated fairly. Those structures and processes must be fair, equitable and easily accessible. The police are human and we need to recognize that fact. The police are asked to handle ambiguous, complex and dangerous situations. Sometimes there are no good ways to handle those scenarios or the officer makes the wrong choice. In a society that can easily become highly polarized, structures and processes that ensure justice for all are required.

Our society is undergoing transformational change. We are beginning to recognize how our culture, habits and stereotypes create discrimination. The police are a focal point of change because when there is distress, anger, or violence, the police are always called to the scene. This legislation recognizes some of those issues and will help ur world become more equitable and inclusive. It is a very good start.

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