

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Ranking Members Kissel and Rebimas, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

As a constituent of the state of Connecticut, I support legislation that will bring greater accountability to police, especially with those who racially profile, brutalize, and murder civilians. However, I also want to see the state work to divert from policing so that it can reinvest into our communities. It is crucial that we are taking this funding and allocating it towards education, health care (especially mental health services), affordable housing, and other important social services and public goods. The bill, as it is currently proposed, is a start, but needs amendments before consideration for support. There are sections there within that allow the police to police themselves, such as sections 1-4 & 15, in certification and recertification processes. That is simply unacceptable. This language must be amended to create an independent body comprised of those that do not have a conflict of interest to oversee these processes. The sections regarding a new inspector general position (Sections 33-35) the language doesn't go far enough. There needs to be an independent prosecutor. There's substantial evidence showing that implicit bias training does not reduce police brutality nor does it significantly change police behavior. Mandatory implicit bias training should not be included in this bill. An independent body should also be instituted to determine whether social workers are useful to replace police for some work, not police departments as is in Section 18 as police have a conflict of interest in making these decisions. There is also a section regarding mandate body cameras and vehicles cameras, however these devices do not and cannot reduce police violence and increase accountability unless they are also accompanied by adequate policies that provide actual accountability for police. Without proper policies in place, these devices can quickly turn into tools of surveillance on communities. Previous studies have found that over 90% of offices nationally where police wear body cameras have used obtained footage as evidence in cases against private citizens while less than 9% have used it to prosecute officers. Please consider making these changes before supporting this bill. Literal lives are at stake in our communities. If you really want to go all out and make real differences, support defunding the police and allocating those dollars back into the community through education programs, health and mental health programs, housing programs, and other social services.

Thank you for your time,

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