

There is no question that there is a need for open communication between police and the citizens they serve. Everyone who wants them deserves answers to hold police accountable for their actions. It is an unfortunate time in police work when a police officer is judged by something someone did hundreds of miles away. The State of Connecticut has been ahead of the curve when it comes to transparency. I would venture to say that racial profiling and racism within police departments in Connecticut is not an issue that garners national attention and calls for action. These issues, just with any disciplinary issue, should be addressed on a case-by-case basis in the respective police departments as they are presented. Sweeping police reform is not an answer just because the court of public opinion thinks so. State lawmakers need to take a stand to back police officers so that we can go on doing the good work that we always do.

I am highly educated and a highly trained police officer who has to make split-second decisions based on the information available to me at the time. U.S. Supreme Court case *Graham v. Connor* has set the standard for reasonableness. Changing the legal standard for deadly use of force would have officers second guessing themselves, leading to deadly consequences. Changing this standard is a slippery slope. "Reasonableness" is one of the most important things that police officers need to hold onto. That is the law set by the highest court in the country, but it is being proposed that Connecticut be more restrictive.

Another issue brought in this accountability bill is to, "Study" the need for police at road construction sites. This has absolutely nothing to do with police accountability and I am dumbfounded as to why this proposal is in this bill. There is a need to maintain safety at constructions sites. This safety is enhanced when a police officer is present. Getting people to slow down and move over for police officers is hard enough. Why put more lives in danger? Construction site safety is so important that the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration has a whole week to bring awareness to work zone safety. It appears that this was slipped into this bill to intentionally take away overtime for police officers, causing a negative financial impact.

One essential function of a police officer is motor vehicle enforcement. These traffic stops are inherently dangerous. How do guns, drugs and other contraband get into the hands of your children? They are transported in cars. A police officer cannot smell most drugs (pills, methamphetamine, fentanyl). Officers generally base consent searches on behaviors, both verbal and non-verbal, of people inside vehicles. People giving indicators that they may have contraband in the car are sometimes asked for consent to search their vehicle. A person has every option to say no to a police officer to search their vehicle. If a person feels as if they have been coerced into a search after an officer finds contraband, the burden of proof is on that person in court to show that. This is easier than ever to do with dash cam and body cam recordings. We ask for consent to search vehicles for officer safety and safety of our communities. Taking this basic, minimally intrusive (if intrusive at all since they agree to it) function away from police may have disastrous effects. Will a person who is illegally transporting firearms and who has a pound of fentanyl in their car ever going to consent to a search? You need to ask yourself what is that gun going to do to somebody and who is that fentanyl going to kill once it is ingested if it doesn't get seized because we didn't ask if it was okay to search their car.

Another study was to see the merits and feasibility of requiring police to buy and maintain liability insurance as a condition of employment. Police have historically been covered by their respective towns from civil liability in cases. Should there be a judgement for misconduct, that is done through an internal investigation and discipline may result, depending on the situation. This will cause another financial burden to police officers. The, "benefits" that came with being a municipal employee in the past are long gone. Trends of shifting healthcare costs to employees have already started. To add another required cost to police officers is unjust. Frivolous lawsuits have plagued courts over time. People looking for a quick payout will become the norm in this job should this go through. This will make the job less attractive, which will result in lowering hiring standards, which will ultimately lead to people being hired that have no business being police officers.

The last issue I would like to address is the 1033 Program. The proposed change prohibits the buying and use of military style equipment (though I did not see a specific definition). Police occasionally need tools designed for specific tasks. I don't believe that an armored truck should be used to patrol a neighborhood as part of general police work. I do, however, believe armored vehicles and specialized equipment must be available to officers

who need them. We are faced with active shooters in movie theaters, malls and schools. IEDs, Vehicle borne explosives and vehicle ramming attacks have mostly occurred in Europe, but may find their way here as this country. Why take this specialized equipment away from police officers who need it? I have been on the receiving end of gunfire and was protected by an armored vehicle. It absorbed all of the shots and no officers (nor the suspect) were hurt. So how is taking these tools away helping anyone if it is going to force a confrontation because of a lack of protection? Eliminating this will prevent officers from getting the protection that is needed to complete dangerous tasks, including rescuing and evacuating citizens who cannot safely leave an area.

People who are marching and voicing their desire for change have a unique opportunity presented to them. You would think that police departments would be flooded with applications so people can become officers to make the change they want to see. You should ask yourself why you aren't seeing this. Possibly because of all the danger, long hours, time away from family, working holidays...the list of negatives can go on and on. But despite all the negatives, we still show up and do our job. I don't disagree with some of the changes that are proposed. There are merits to holding officers and departments accountable for their actions. However, this is a dangerous bill that goes over the top to undermine the authority that keeps us all safe. If you don't think a violent crime can happen to you or your family, you are wrong. Please do not let this legislation pass the way it is written.

Sergeant Ryan Parsons

Cromwell Police Department