

Testimony of Sergeant Bradford Seely
LCO 3471, An Act Concerning Police Accountability

My name is Sgt. Brad Seely and I am president of the Bridgeport Police Union, Local 1159. I would like to comment on LCO 3471, An Act Concerning Police Accountability. I have been a police officer for nearly 19 years in Bridgeport Connecticut. Growing up, I always wanted to be a police officer. I can recall how proud my family was the day the badge was pinned on my uniform. My life and career have been spent serving people. That's what being a police officer is all about.

Throughout my career I have seen police officers perform numerous good and heroic acts, above and beyond their duties, that go unrecognized on a daily basis. Working in a big city like Bridgeport, I have seen the good, but I also have seen the bad. Police respond to people because we are called to help. It's our responsibility to enforce the law and protect our communities.

Often when we are called to respond, we are dealing with people in horrible circumstances. We are trained as public safety officers to serve the community. We often take on many roles in this capacity, including social worker and peace keeper. The vast majority of police officers are inherently good people and do the best job they can, given the circumstances they are dealing with at that time.

There are numerous problems with LCO 34871 that will negatively affect all police officers:

- Creating a new state civil rights action and eliminating the defense of qualified immunity. This could lead to mandating that every police officer must personally obtain liability insurance. The result would be that any officer entering into a potential force situation could cause him or her to hesitate, think twice and thereby endanger himself/herself or innocent members of the public.
- Changing the Graham standard. Adding additional requirements at times when quick reactions are required (in split seconds) will put officers in jeopardy. Police officers in Connecticut are already trained on objective reasonableness standard. The current standards already require that an officer's use of force be "objectively reasonable."
- Language allowing POST to suspend an officer from their job for up to 45 days, in addition to later decertifying officers for such things as "undermining public confidence in police work." Departments already suspend and discipline their officers for law or policy violations.
- Mandating mental health tests that POST can then use to take "personnel actions." Again, who pays for this? Will the evaluation be confidential? What happens to the officer? Officers who are on the job now did not sign up for this and it is overly intrusive. This will further hinder recruitment and retention of good officers, while we here in Bridgeport are already short-staffed by almost 50 officers.
- Giving subpoena power to civilian review boards. The city of Bridgeport is under a federal court decree (Barros) that means every civilian complaint requires an investigation. The results then go to the Police Commission, which is in essence, a civilian review board.

This bill has been rushed and pushed through without a lot of thoughts on the impact of everyday officers. I urge you to consider these issues when you vote on this bill.

Respectfully,
Bradford Seely