



## **Treasurer Shawn T. Wooden**

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

JULY 17, 2020

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on ***An Act Concerning Police Accountability***.

The horrific murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Elijah McClain, and Connecticut's Jose Soto, and countless others, have brought the issues of police brutality, racism, and systemic inequalities to the forefront of our nation's conscious. As public officials, it is our moral obligation to listen to the voices calling out for change and to seize this moment of reckoning to reform the systems of injustice in our state and nation. I applaud the work of the chairs and ranking members of this committee for coming together to take an important step forward towards justice and equality.

This bill would bring much needed accountability and oversight to local and state police. It ends qualified immunity, allows for the creation of local civilian review boards, prohibits chokeholds and consent searches, establishes penalties for false reporting, and expands and increases training standards. The bill before you also sets guidelines for "crowd management." After the police response across the country to the protests last month, it should be clear that this section is a necessary addition to our statutes. While we all rely on law enforcement to keep our communities safe and secure, police officers must also be held accountable for wrongdoing just as any other employee or citizen would be — actions must be carried out with a deep respect for human and civil rights.

I have great respect for the many officers who courageously and compassionately honor their commitment to protect and to serve. In fact, I have personally experienced working with some of them and prosecutors to help find and bring my cousin's murderer to justice. It is my hope that families within our state and across America also receive justice, even when the offending party is an officer. According to Police Mapping Violence, between 2013 and 2019, there were 214 unarmed Black people who were killed by police who were on-duty, and 196 of these incidents there were no known charges filed against the officer. There is no question that there is a problem with the culture of policing, and the enforcement and equal application of the law. This is why this legislation is so critical to the future of our state.

What we have seen in communities across Connecticut and our nation, the hundreds of thousands of protestors calling for change, is not merely a moment in history, but part of an ongoing movement toward justice. This is the first step of many in terms of building trust and transparency within our communities. The work of this committee has shown that we can come together to try to solve these problems, and we can set policy that doesn't just move the ball forward, but is transformative for our children and future generations.

Thank you again for your important work on this issue, and I know you will not end the conversation here. I urge the Committee to act favorably on **An Act Concerning Police Accountability**.