

My name is Sue-Ellen Jobes and my husband is Michael Jobes. I am a Police Officer at the Glastonbury Police Department and a member of our regional Traffic team which covers Glastonbury and a several other neighboring towns and cities. My husband is a Sergeant at the Hartford Police Department. I am writing this letter to you to voice our opinion to numerous elements of the proposed Bill concerning Police Accountability (LCO 3471).

Let me start off by saying that I have been in this profession for seven years now (my husband for eight) and employed by two separate agencies. During my time in this career, I have met many members from different departments across this country through various training exercises, and I can say that the members of our department as well as departments throughout this state are considered to be some of the best trained in the country. The majority of our officers treat all people equally and with respect. The majority of us do the right thing, whatever the situation calls for. I have always been proud to be a part of this profession, however due to the political stance as of late, it is unpopular to show our full support for the police. I am soon to be a mother and I want to teach my son to be proud of his parents and the profession they have taken on. I want to empower my son to become who he wants to be, however if this bill passes, I would be fearful to encourage this profession on him. I understand the concerns that recent events have raised, but it is entirely possible to say you support both black lives and the police. We need to stand together, not against one another.

There is no one in this country that has greater anger and disgust for the actions that our fellow Minneapolis officer took on that horrific day. He acted with such disregard for human life and went against everything we stood for. Because of that one officer, all of our badges have been tarnished. We are all seen as the enemy, when all we wanted to do was help our communities. When we were all hired, we took an oath to protect and serve the community in which we are employed. We do not want problem officers in our ranks, so I fully support more thorough applicant checks to ensure we have the best people in this profession. However, if this bill passes, I am fearful that the desire to do this job will diminish and the number of qualified applicants will decrease if not go extinct.

As the profession has evolved over the years, police officers have had to take on more responsibilities with minimal training. A large percentage of calls we respond to are not criminal in nature. On a daily basis we are asked to become neighborhood mediators over minor disputes. We are asked to become social workers when called for civil custody disputes. We are asked to become mental health professionals when called to handle an emotionally disturbed person at a business, residence or public area. I support allowing funding to non-law enforcement teams to deal with these kinds of calls for service, however with the disclaimer that police interaction may be necessary as well depending on the situation.

I support these programs, as long it does not come at the expense of police funding. Our department is relatively well funded; however, it still struggles to send officers to the training

they need and want due to budget constraints. I fully support the State Legislature to require more training of officers, however I believe it is irresponsible to think it can be done without increasing training funds. We receive training every three years to maintain our certification, however there are zero hours dedicated to defensive tactics training which the concern here is. I support requiring more training for officers, however as legislatures you should research what training is truly lacking in our program and implement that.

While this proposed bill has some items as discussed that I support, the following items are either outright dangerous or potentially financially crippling to our police officers, *without true benefit to members of the community*. Specifically:

- 1.) Qualified immunity. This bill would remove the long upheld (by both the State and Federal Supreme Court) doctrine of qualified immunity for police officers. This largely seems to stem from the misconception that police officers cannot be sued civilly or held accountable for wrongdoing. Qualified immunity is not absolute immunity. If a police officer is found to have committed a crime and violated a person's rights in court, they already lose this protection. Qualified immunity protects officers from frivolous law suits. Even one baseless lawsuit would require an officer to seek legal counsel and would cost thousands of dollars. No officer should have to worry about being sued for doing their job the right way. If this passes, this will have a negative impact on the communities we serve because officers will be reluctant to perform their police duties for fear of losing everything, or they will be tied up defending unwarranted lawsuits instead of serving their communities. Ultimately, the members of the community will be the true victims in this.
- 2.) The prohibition of military designed equipment. There have been calls to "demilitarize the police" in recent years, but what does that mean? This bill calls for the immediate return of all military designed equipment. This would include armored vehicles and night vision, which are used mainly for SWAT call outs to aid in picking up survivors safely and approaching homes in the darkness for an element of surprise. Why does this bill require level III body armor and rifles to be sent back? History shows that the majority of school shootings are committed by individuals with guns, and not just pistols but rifles. By supporting this, just know that the next time I am responding to a violent felon or active shooter at a school I will no longer have access to the body armor that protects me from the most commonly available rifle rounds, but I will also be walking into the incident at a disadvantage. Rifles have better accuracy at longer distances, which would be useful in an active shooter situation. I understand that as individuals you may see all this equipment and see the police as militarized, however all this equipment has proven to be useful in the saving many lives in the communities we serve.

- 3.) In regards to use of force, the bill is proposing that when making an arrest or preventing escape, the officer must “exhaust all reasonable alternatives to the use of deadly physical force.” This may sound good to the average citizen, try every tool at our disposal prior to using lethal force, however I can say these changes are dangerous and will lead to more assaults on us. We all wish that we could stop the armed, combative subject that we respond to with only talking to them. The situation where we have time to talk to this subject from a safe distance, try pepper spraying them, try tasing them and try using a baton, all before reaching for our firearm is a made up fantasy. The Supreme Court has continuously upheld that police have to deal with rapidly evolving conditions and have to make split second life or death decisions. If an officer is presented with force on them or a third party which could cause death or serious physical injury, the only safe response is for the officer to respond with the same amount of force. As Officers, we always try to deescalate a situation or use lesser force when we can, as we were all trained to do; however, sometimes the situation evolves too quickly. No officer wants to be involved in a shooting or a deadly force situation. But requiring an officer to go through their whole belt of tools before their firearm in a seconds-long life or death scenario will only get more officers or community members killed or injured.
- 4.) Consent Searches: To completely eliminate the ability for an officer to conduct a search of a motor vehicle which has been stopped for a violation is absurd. There have been many instances where consent searches have led to a number of significant arrests, of various weapon and drug possession. Think about if your loved one was killed by someone using an illegal weapon or someone who sold them illegal drugs; wouldn't you want the police officer to conduct a minimally intrusive consensual search for guns or drugs before your loved one died? The ability to conduct that search from consent could eliminate another act of gun violence in our community or to prevent another fatal drug overdose. If this bill passes, there would be more guns and drugs on the streets. I ask that you first consider identifying how many innocent people are asked for consent and what is the result of the subsequent search and inconvenience. The majority of innocent people will be more than willing to assist in any way to be able to continue on with their day. If this passes, a person may tell the officer they have nothing to hide and ask them to search their person or vehicle, however the police officer will have to say NO and tell them we will have to further inconvenience you by waiting for a canine or search warrant.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter in its entirety. I truly hope that you keep this letter in mind while making your decisions going forward with the voting of this bill. I stand with many others in the field and in the community who are strongly against this as it stands now.

For the safety of our officers and the safety of the members of our communities, I urge you to oppose this bill as it is written.

Respectfully,

Officer Sue-Ellen Jobes

Glastonbury Police Department