

July 17th, 2020

Hello Committee Chair Winfield, Committee Chair Straftstrom, Vice Chair Kasser, Vice Chair Blumenthal and Ranking Members Kissel and Rebimbas.

My name is Syd Bakal. I live on campus at Yale University.

I am writing to comment on Draft LCO #3471: An Act Concerning Police Accountability. For too long, Connecticut's police have ignored the civil rights of their residents and routinely targeted Black, Indigenous, and people of color with violence and criminalization. Because of a lack of accountability and oversight, Connecticut police have killed 21 people in the last five years, and have contributed to the frequent violation and harassment of Connecticut's most marginalized communities. I have seen my friends be racially targeted by police officers because they are Black or Latinx, and I know that as Yale students they have the safe-guard of flashing an ID card, but local New Haven residents don't have this kind of safety net. Stephanie Washington was badly injured in a police shooting that happened last spring. Now is the time to make lasting change to reform the system that has caused so much harm already.

This draft legislation represents a start, but still falls short of the fundamental overhaul necessary to protect black, brown, and poor communities in Connecticut from police violence. For example, instances of "may" must be changed to "shall" to make this legislation binding. Police mental health assignments should be conducted annually instead of every five years. Random drug testing should similarly be enforced—for everything, including steroids.

Broadly, before this bill can be taken seriously as a good-faith effort to address this state's scourge of police terror, it must intervene against the violence of the state's correctional institutions and officers as well as police. For greater oversight and accountability of Connecticut's correctional institutions, this bill must include:

1. **Correctional Reform.** Provisions of the bill aimed at holding police accountable MUST extend to correctional officers. Just as policing disproportionately damages b
2. **Independent Oversight.** The bill's draft language calls for the creation of an Inspector General appointed by the Chief State's Attorney. First, this is not independent
3. **A Shift in Funding from Corrections to Communities.** The bill's focus on demilitarization does not go far enough. The bill must explicitly shift funding from polici
4. **Banning routine practices that inflict long-term trauma.** The bill's focus on banning practices that inflict wanton and unnecessary violence during police stops is w
5. **Qualified Immunity.** The use of qualified immunity to shield police from civil action is an essential component of this legislation; the abolition of qualified immunity

Please stand on the right side of history and do your part to change this fundamentally unjust and racist institution.

Sincerely,
Syd Bakal