

Testimony LCO#3471
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Police Reforms in Connecticut

Our state has enjoyed a low crime rate compared to other US States. We have, as a result, a decent quality of life throughout most areas in the state. I work throughout CT, so my experience and observations are not limited to a small part of Ridgefield, CT or even Fairfield County. I travel daily through Waterbury, Bridgeport, Stamford, Wethersfield, Bristol, Hartford, New London, and more. I take local roads and not highways, so that I can be connected to our state.

I understand that there can be challenges to policing effectively and challenges to living in a community with a higher rate of crime. I understand that the vast majority of crime in our state is drug related. That is a problem which needs to be addressed in a myriad of ways. Our state of CT has also turned a blind eye to illegal immigration, and many of our cities have deemed themselves to be sanctuary. That is a violation of Federal Law, so it is quite interesting that a Legislative Body which allows the convenient execution of some laws v. others should be convening to discuss reforms to the police. I would think that 3rd party experts in the law and in policing, should be heavily involved in informing this process, since we do not have a Legislature of civil rights attorneys and experts.

I would like to state my position that ANY law officer I have ever encountered has been respectful and courteous. It is my belief that the vast majority of officers in CT, whether on Municipal or State levels, are respectful, law abiding, well-intentioned, and much appreciated.

I am not a police officer and I am not in a high crime area. I am sure that there are things which can be improved to the benefit of all. I would like to vehemently proclaim I am in full support of maintaining full funding for our Municipal and State officers and, I would also be in favor of increased spending, to go directly into officer training and management, by the Police Departments, with some 3rd party outside oversight.

It would seem in Policing, as in ALL other professions, exceptional training and equipment is essential to success. I would also add that having enough financial resources to adequately recruit and retain officers is vital.

You should, each member of this CT legislative body, ask yourself, 'Would I leave my home every day or every night to go and do this job? Would I risk my life for this community? I sincerely doubt that the vast majority of you, who are tasked with deciding their fates, and evaluating their protocols, would ever put your lives on the line. I am certain of this because MOST OF US WOULD NOT. This is a special brand of people who are brave, dedicated and wish to help others. We should be proud to have them and we should show them our gratitude, appreciation and respect, DAILY. We should teach our children to do the same.

Speaking of children, as parents and citizens, we should be working with the children in our care or in our communities to teach them to obey laws. To counsel them about the use of drugs, guns, gangs, violence, theft, arson, bullying and more. We should teach them, regardless of their race or circumstances to respect the law, and when you encounter an officer maintain calm, respect and compliance. We should not be encouraging hate of any other human being for any reason, be it race, sex, financial status or choice of occupation. Citizens and police all deserve respect.

Officers must treat all citizens, fairly, objectively and respectfully. All of us as human beings owe each other dignity and civility. Officers should also have consequences and transparency when there are complaints against them from citizens. However, like all citizens, officers and civilians are entitled to the presumption of innocence. We all need our due process and we should hold everyone to very high standards to be sure we are following this. We do not want "rush to judgements" by our police, nor do we want it from our legislators, courts and communities. Officers who have a record of multiple disciplinary actions or violations, convictions should have consequences and public transparency.

Community is the key word in all of this. In a community, people work together for the good of all residents. We follow laws, we show respect, decency and courtesy. The goal is for everyone to have a good quality of life. To be able to go out to shop, work or enjoy an evening out, without being preyed upon by a criminal, harassed by an officer, or vice-versa.

Police need to be able to do their jobs in an effective manner. I do not see how untrained people in the legislature can be the body who determines what is and is not effective policing. I do not see how any of this can be enacted into changes in laws, with a knee-jerk response. The "reactivity" of this process does not demonstrate logical, fact and evidence based information, research and study, nor appropriate time for community to be transparently informed, digest and respond. Emotion should not be an impetus for legislation.

AS A CITIZEN I WOULD LIKE TO SEE FACTS AND DATA CONCERNING POLICE ENCOUNTERS THROUGHOUT THE STATE, I would like a full set of objective, non-emotional facts. I do not think that this Legislative body could have access to and complete understanding of all relevant data related to this topic at this point in time. As a citizen, I was barely even given notice by my own Representative that this was even on the boards.

I implore this body to take adequate time, many months if needed, to review ALL Data and give citizens a reasonable and adequate amount of time and access to transparent data. You should be required to consult with third party outside experts with NO POLITICAL(be it unions or legislators) skin in the game in CT, before any decisions and changes are made. I urge our Governor to be sure that ALL CT citizens are receiving the rights, time, information and resources to be involved and for all to make well-informed, unbiased, non-reactive and non-political/non-partisan decisions.

There are MANY CT Residents and Businesses who no longer wish to reside in CT Due to our High taxes and loss of jobs. Crime (overall state by state) has been one of the things we can point to as a success for CT . We would also like human rights and equal justice to be a community pillar and source of pride. Making hasty decisions now can tip the scales to a wrong sided outcome.

Thank you all for your time and service.