

Good evening,

The Bill being considered is in draft form. I am totally in favor of this Bipartisan process. I am providing my perspectives on the circumstances that have surrounded us and are bearing down on us from different directions but tragically the brunt of the burden and deadly consequences are making the lives of the dispossessed and disadvantaged even more fraught and intolerable than ever before in the face of the economic and health consequences of the Pandemic for members of BIPOC [Black , Indigenous and people of Color] communities as well as the LGBTQ+ communities across all Zip codes.

I will provide specific comments on particular recommendations that are being considered in the Legislative process to draft a final version of a Police Accountability Bill that can enacted and signed into a Law that we can all live in safety, comity and amity and will thus be the envy of other States and pride of our citizens in the Constitution State.

“Give birth again to a dream”

once we can put our 400-year-old nightmare behind us finally.

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Testimony on Draft LCO #3471” in the subject line

Sharing my Thoughts on Police Accountability Draft Bill

I. Setting the Context

It is true that friends and colleagues and news report can provide multiple chilling reports of the fraught, stigmatized dehumanized status accorded to persons who are suffering from treatable legitimate medical disorders that manifest behavior including persons suffering from serious mental disorders Substance and alcohol dependence or persons constituting that makes it easier to be subject to “othering”. This in turn prompts in some horrible instances to reprehensible punitive behavior and death at the hands of some law enforcement officers.

However. I want to add another perspective about collaborative interactions with Law Enforcement officers that were beneficial in the south end of Boston in Boston City Hospital during the late sixties and 70s when there was chaos from a number of factors the officers of District 4 BPD and us who worked in the ER and the clinics especially those run by volunteers at the Pine street Inn were very helpful to our people we were trying to help.

Similarly in Middletown, since about 1980, people who sought help from the Soup Kitchen and the CHC [FQHC] and were lodging themselves under nearby bridge on the North end and people who came to score drugs and overdosed in the drug dens or certain street corners or trying to or not jump from the high Bridge over the CT River were rescued by local police and taken to the ER in Mx. Hospital.

I have worked on both sites CHC and the Hospital. The local police or State police coordinated with us before they brought these persons with both SMI and AUD / SUD or if they had some questions about the persons situation. meds etc. when they came upon them near the approaches of the bridge or at the railings of the bridge or asleep or unconscious in a doorway or alley or in a snow bank or in the middle of the Road acting exuberantly before they were brought to the ER. Both in Boston and Middletown I want to say Police Depts have contributed to Peace and wellbeing overall during all hours of the day and night in all seasons of the year every year.

It would be considered a blessing visited on the families of these individuals who are given a second or even the fourth or fifth chance by being found overdosed or severely drunk or severely injured, raped and tied up and left to die or incapacitated by falling asleep on a snow bank by robust and resourceful men and women in blue rescue them and get them to an ER. It is so tragic occasionally we miss some individuals in these dire circumstances I have long thought of the such a tragic death of 46-year-old Ms. Terry Mc Govern one snowy freezing night just before Christmas 1994. I know of many instances where the dreaded night time phone call from the police or the ER which could bring in dreadful news instead conveyed more emotionally stabilizing news because of the resourcefulness and expertise of the robust men and women in blue. I know how relieved my staff and I are to know that patients of ours were found in darkened rooms in their locked homes or apartments sometimes with the gas turned on when we request the police to do a wellness check or find them wandering on the highway.

The bigger problem I encountered was when the people were arrested and taken to the police station than the usual distressing fraught vignettes. The Local NAMI and my staff and I wanted to be sure they did not say a word and talk themselves into deeper holes than they might have been in. We have worked with persons who were in town without papers but needed treatment urgently and were nabbed by ICE. Working with Lawyers our treatment staff were able to keep the person in our area with a judicial ruling and protect them from ICE and keep them with their relatives including grandchildren some of whom were legally in town. We were grateful the Local police did not interfere with our patients and our programs of care in school-based clinics and the Health Centers.

In other civil or criminal cases, they can be treated really bad in the court system without good legal representation. We have had to prepare our patients to deal with the ordeal of being on the stand in court by sticking to a few facts and not volunteering anything or ramble about their acts as young men years ago or share their hallucinations or delusions.

Once they get locked up in a jail and can't get bail 100% almost they get no meds and little or no help for unknown length of time leading to terrible conditions and exacerbations leading to solitary confinement and then some have ended up in forensic systems.

The role of the police in the areas of the towns I worked in were important to assure our Medical establishments tried to assure community benefit. Police officers were eager to be included in committees dealing with Domestic violence, [trained female and Male officers helped the victims and perpetrators who were being treated to manage their legally hazardous interactions], Early childhood trauma and its consequences DWI, and school based issues, transporting persons with SMI or SUD/ AUD involuntarily to ERs times without number every day in every jurisdiction in the USA quite efficiently and successfully. The Staff of Aware Recovery Care-CT. In addition, our colleagues work with persons with Substance and Alcohol Dependence disorders in four States FL, Maine and New Hampshire and collaborate with each other and community partners including Treatment Professional and Law Enforcement and First responders

I thank those who share the chilling deadly narratives of encounters between Police Officers and persons with Severe mental Illness. I want to affirm these tragic occurrences, but it is important for me and certainly for my staff to broaden our perspectives about these interactions by opening the doors to other more uplifting and heartwarming narratives little more ajar. There are some police officers who appear to act unlawfully and cause death and deep sorrow, evoke anger and inspire protest but overall, the Police Dept officers have been collaborative with our schools, health care organizations and community organizations. The protests clearly reflect **“the needs of society to determine its ethics”** Maya Angelou.

I want to add this fact of life for 401 years that Black men have been and are still being disproportionately subjected to similar reprehensible hate crimes by some racist civilians and the occasional law enforcement officers. I have written extensively on these hearts stopping recurring nightmarish horrors. How do we end this horror and wake up from the 400-year nightmare?

Ms. Angelou reminded us sagaciously, **“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again. Maya Angelou**

The dream I am thinking of is one that our dear martyred revered brother Martin spoke about” of a Beloved Community. The core value of the quest for **Dr. King’s Beloved Community** was Agape. Agape is the love of God operating in the human heart.” He said that “Agape does not begin by discriminating between worthy and unworthy people...It begins by loving

others for their sakes” and “**makes no distinction between a friend and enemy; it is directed toward both...Agape is love seeking to preserve and create community.**”

The Episcopal Church created The Becoming Beloved Community Vision Document and accompanying resources help us to understand and take up the long-term commitments necessary to form loving, liberating and life-giving relationships with each other. They have created a dynamic illustration of the process of building a beloved community. This ongoing perpetual cyclical process of forgiveness, repentance and reconciliation, growth, and recovery, to achieve robust health and wellbeing requires the continuous long-term collaboration of our patients, their families, Medical and Mental Health Professionals, and integration of Theological beliefs, Religious rituals, and Spiritual practices. This Illustration symbolizes the trajectory of identification, admission, acceptance and acknowledgement that is subsumed in the process of building resilience that can be strengthened and enhanced by an empathic sharing of responsibilities between those who seek assistance and care-givers which enables them to start with telling the truth.

I welcome your responses.

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