

I am concerned about the disproportionate allocation of state and local funds relative to police budgets and community service funds. Financial resources need to be reallocated and reinvested in communities and services that will benefit the community and address the roots of surface issues police are responding to. Police respond to an inappropriately wide range of service calls with many of the presenting issues outside of their scope of practice. Most calls are for non-violence and many calls are rooted in lack of community resources, support, and access to services. Divesting from excessively large police budgets and investing those funds in community agencies and programs that address the roots of community challenges is a more effective and efficient use of taxpayer money. All residents benefit when fellow community members can access supportive services that help improve quality of life.

There are many vital community-oriented agencies in Connecticut that are committed to providing care and resources with demonstrated positive outcomes for the service recipients and therefore indirectly improving the whole community. These agencies are historically underfunded and have been defunded by difficult budget cuts, year after year. Community agencies are the experts in addressing community issues and should be awarded the financial investments desperately needed to increase the reach of their important work.

Another critical area to consider for change is adopting a regulation that would require a certain percentage of police department employees to live within the community they serve. Data suggests that in many cities and urban police departments there are very few officers that live in the jurisdictions they are managing. Police officer approaches and commitment to safety and health of the communities they serve are strengthened when the officer has personal ties to the area.

Finally, an impactful change in working to increase police accountability can be made by addressing civilian payouts, which are taxpayer funded civil settlements paid due to police misconduct. This is a gross misuse of taxpayer money. Taxes support the heavy police budgets at baseline and then taxpayer funds are further drawn on to settle misconduct suits at the expense of the community the police are theoretically employed to safeguard. Shifting the cost of misconduct to the police unions and officers will help ensure police unions and officers bear more proportional responsibility for the decisions and conduct they engage in.