

State of Connecticut

**African-American Affairs Commission
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509
Hartford, CT 06106
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April 1, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Rep. Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Glenn A. Cassis and I am the Executive Director of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC). The mission of the Commission is to promote and improve the economic, educational, health, safety and political well-being of the African-American community in Connecticut. The AAAC is non-partisan and provides comment on legislation to the General Assembly. I wish to submit testimony in support of HB 6628 – An Act Concerning the Safe Use of Electronic Defense Weapons by Peace Officers.

The AAAC believes that use of any weapon to restrain an individual has the potential to result in lethal consequences. When a peace officer is required to use a weapon to restrain an individual it should be measured and appropriate for the situation. A peace officer should never find themselves overmatched by an individual. At the same time, there are situations when a defensive weapon should be used to restrain an individual. Although Tasers are designed to be non-lethal, inappropriate use can result in unintended consequences. Research published by the American Heart Association Journal in 2012 reported cases where Taser shocks were lethal if delivered to the chest. Training on the proper use of Tasers is a must in order to insure a suspect is not irrevocably harmed. Eleven deaths have occurred in Connecticut since 2005 from the use of Tasers.

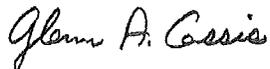
Our Mission

To improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut

The other precaution that concerns the AAAC greatly is that data shows that in Connecticut, Tasers have been used a disproportionate amount of times for restraining people of color, African-Americans and Latinos. In 2009 data indicates that in Meriden and New Haven, Tasers were used on people of color 55% and 84% respectively. In Houston, Texas where data has been kept (2005), 90% of the incidents when Tasers were used, it was used on a person of color. Connecticut should collect and analyze data on the use of Tasers to understand the reason for the disproportionality of usage.

The Commission agrees that law enforcement should be furnished with equipment that will limit their chances for being injured while on duty. The AAAC also believes that effective training can avoid deaths. More importantly the Commission believes that protected classes should not be targeted with Tasers for restraining. Data on the use of Tasers should be collected, analyzed and reported to the Legislature to insure that this method of restraint is not being applied disproportionately towards people of color.

Thank you for accepting this testimony.



Glenn A. Cassis
Executive Director