

Testimony before the Judiciary Committee
March 20, 2015
By Michael Bisnov
Sergeant, Plainville Police Department, on behalf of AFSCME Council 15, Connecticut
Council of Police Unions

RE: S.B. No. 1109 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE.

My name is Michael Raymond Bisnov, I am a sergeant with the Plainville Connecticut Police Department and have been a sworn peace officer since October of 2006. I am currently assigned to the department's Domestic Violence Intervention Team (DVIT) and the Patrol Division. Prior to these assignments, I worked as a detective in the Criminal Investigation Division, and as a member of the Greater New Britain Shooting Task Force. However long before I achieved these titles, and hopefully long after I have retired them, I am a son, a nephew, a neighbor, a team mate, and a God-fearing American patriot born and raised here in the State of Connecticut.

I humbly stand before all those present today with hope that my words will discourage those responsible for the passage of law from implementing new or revised legislation which would further handicap the ability of Connecticut police officers to effectively enforce the laws they have sworn to protect.

We see it now more often than ever, the sensationalizing of police use of force. There are not many certainties in life that we can call absolute, but one such certainty that exists is the need for police to employ force, when necessary, in order to keep the peace. We bring force against those who seek to harm those we have voluntarily sworn to protect. I understand that there have been incidents in the past where the authority bestowed upon police has been abused. Police officers across this state and nation all share one trait, we share this trait with each and every other member of humanity, we share this trait with each soul present in this room. We are fallible. As are teachers, doctors, law makers, public officials, restaurant employees and every other human being capable of free thought.

There is a significant difference between human error and human malice. I have zero tolerance for those who abuse their power, or for those who employ it negligently or recklessly. Our system already has safe guards, such as the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights, in place to address those who act outside the law. I firmly support these individuals being prosecuted swiftly and severely, to the fullest extent of the law. What I do not support is the passing or amending of legislation based upon knee jerk reactions to what is today's media fueled hot topic.

I have never been one for numbers, especially statistics. I feel that numbers can be significantly misleading, and easily manipulated to meet the intended agenda of its

collector. Some interesting numbers to consider when deciding if police are constantly engaging in the use of excessive force to the point where additional legislation is required to safeguard the citizens of Connecticut from these storm troopers are as follows: The United States Department of Justice published statistics regarding arrest-related deaths from 2003-2009, these statistics included numbers provided by police departments in the State of Connecticut. The FBI estimated that during this time period law enforcement officers made 97.9 million arrests. Of these 97.9 million arrests, 4,813 arrests resulted in death. So what percentage of these 97.9 million arrests resulted in death? It's incalculable. It is less than 1%. So to break this down further, an American Citizen has a better than 99% chance of surviving an arrest encounter with American police officers. This is also only referring to arrest related situations, which are without question by their very nature the most strenuous, volatile encounter a citizen and police officer could possibly share. As of March 20, 2015, the Plainville Police Department has logged 5,034 incident report numbers for the year. That number includes thousands of interactions with the general public. You will not find a single excessive use of force, or officer involved fatality within those thousands of encounters. You will find thousands of lives saved, thousands of lives touched, and thousands of victims provided hope where it once never existed.

I have seen the evil that man, or women, is capable of inflicting upon his fellow man. We establish law to ensure order. We elect public officials to create these laws. We swear in police officers to enforce these laws and maintain order. Our system is not broken in this regard. To argue that additional legislation is necessary to curb the already near non-existent use of excessive force by police is to concede that it is. Additional legislation based upon soap box rhetoric, or the often times misinformed, emotionally fueled outcry of the few, only applies more fear to act upon the shoulders of the already overburdened men and women who serve as peace officers in this state. This fear to act will, without question, result in the death and/or injury of more citizens and police officers alone, then police brutality can ever, or will ever victimize. Legislation which contradicts the facts will only cause a significant, possibly irreversible, chilling effect upon the effectiveness of law enforcement today.

Government is the hand, and law enforcement is the instrument. Please do not pass legislation that will prevent your instrument from appropriately serving each and every citizen of this state. Please do not pass legislation which feels good today, ignoring the sorrow and turmoil it may cause tomorrow. Do not find yourselves wondering, has the pendulum now swung too far? I love the fact that I live in a state that would allow my voice to be heard, that allows my action and input to have a say in the pages of history which we may be drafting at this very moment. Please don't keep me from serving those I'm sworn to protect to the best of my ability. It has been an honor and a privilege; I greatly appreciate your time and consideration.

