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# CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION

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Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Andrew Matthews. I am the President of the Connecticut State Police Union, which represents approximately 1,076 Troopers, Sergeants and Master Sergeants. I am also the Chairman of the National Troopers Coalition, representing nearly 42,000 State Troopers around the country. Today we are here to speak **IN OPPOSITION OF CERTAIN PORTIONS OF:**

*PROPOSED HOUSE BILL NO. 5293*

***“AN ACT CONCERNING EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE.”***

Connecticut State Troopers and all police officers in Connecticut risk their lives every day. We are willing to sacrifice our own life to protect the freedom and safety of people we have never met before. We are willing to never return home to our families in order to fulfill our calling and our oath of office by enforcing the laws and protect the constitutions of Connecticut and the United States. All we ask for in return is to have the confidence, support and trust of our elected leaders, the public, and those that lead our agencies.

Unfortunately, in recent years the law enforcement profession has significantly changed. Today, we live in a society where members of the public have little respect for government, symbols of authority, the criminal justice system, and law enforcement officers. Some are defiant, disobedient, and disrespectful. These people often ignore basic verbal directives proven to bring peace and stability to situations. Often, members of the public will yell, scream, spit, threaten and even become physically violent, causing injuries and even death to police officers. When a police officer is required to make a split second decision in order to save him/herself or others, immediately the media, and members of the public (without gathering the facts) claim their actions were excessive and unjustified. Most members of the public do not understand that violent and unarmed individuals can inflict serious or fatal injuries.

Admittedly, for many decades and in some parts of our country still today, there have been outrageous examples of discrimination and disparate treatment of members of minority communities. However, here within the Connecticut State Police, we take great pride in ensuring the conduct of our Troopers is respectful of everyone, regardless of race, color, creed or condition. All agencies should expect that their officers treat members of the public with the highest level of dignity and respect. If there are any allegations of excessive force, our agency acts swiftly to conduct a thorough Internal Affairs investigation. If substantiated, members are held accountable. Surely, we are not perfect but we always strive to do better to ensure we provide optimal police service.

The Connecticut State Police Union opposes this bill because it appears its rationale is based on a national trend -- rather than to correct inappropriate conduct here in Connecticut. The additional requirements that this bill would create would cause concerns related to the following:

**Sec. 2 - Body Cameras:**

The public may not be aware that all patrol Troopers have Motor Vehicle Recorders (MVR) in their assigned cruisers. Department policy requires each Trooper to activate their MVR and audio recording devices when engaged with the public during a traffic stop or pursuit. As such, it is redundant and a tax-payer burden to have additional recording devices.



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If police officers were required to wear body cameras and were required to record all interactions with the public it would: 1) deter the public from speaking with police about personal and sensitive information for fear they could be identified as a witness and may become a victim of retaliation; 2) impact the solvability rate of crimes due to the lack of cooperation from the public, 3) be a significant cost associated with purchasing and maintaining the equipment, storing the recorded data, and hiring additional staff, 4) potentially effect the morale and productivity of police officers concerned with an increase in complaints and monitoring – some proactive officers could become more reserved, 5) interactions and interviews with victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults would become public records, and 6) per CGS: 1-217 all public record/recordings could be released to perpetrators.

**Sec. 4(b) - Chief State's Attorney:**

The Connecticut State Police Major Crime Unit takes great pride in conducting unbiased and impartial investigations and have earned an exceptional reputation with the Chief State's Attorney's Office. For decades, whenever there is a deadly force incident involving peace officers in Connecticut, the Chief State's Attorney's Office has consistently relied on the services of the State Police Major Crime squad. This relationship has proven to work and it is unnecessary to outsource these responsibilities. Carving out an exception to create a "special assistant state's attorney" to conduct investigations, is not only financially wasteful but it dismisses the real skills and talents of current major crime detectives -- and even questions the integrity of the current practice. Also, a "special assistant state's attorney" may not be experienced or trained related to law enforcement techniques and/or use of force policies. It appears the leadership within the States Attorney's office and State Police have complete confidence in the current process of investigating incidents of deadly force.

Some people believe that excessive force occurs often, but in reality when you gather the facts and understand that nearly all police interactions are peacefully resolved you understand that excessive use of force is rare - although still unacceptable. One example of a critic of police use of force changing his perspective occurred recently when Quanell X, a long time community activist who has lead many protests against law enforcement, participated in a training simulation at the Missouri City Police Department. Quanell X did this "because he wanted to know how he would react if he were to go through the same life-and-death training scenarios that police use." During the training Quanell X had to decide whether to discharge his firearm, use his taser, or hold fire and give verbal commands. When Quanell X repeatedly requests that a subject "show me your hands" and the individual failed to comply he discovered the reality of how quickly he could be shot. Quanell said "race never entered his mind, but he does admit this: "If I'm in a high crime area that I've worked, and I know it's a high-crime area and I know the kind of calls we get, I could easily see me pulling my gun quicker, on a simple call, I hate to say it." After several training exercises, Quanell had this to say: "Please, brothers and sisters, if they (police) tell you to do something, do it." This experience changed Quanell X's ideas of what he might do in a situation if he were a police officer. We encourage you to watch the video of this experience and we have provided the link in this written testimony. (KHOU 11 News: Quanell X went through four live-action shooting scenarios," February 5, 2015).

There are actions we can take together to reassure the public and maintain the trust and integrity of law enforcement in Connecticut. The Connecticut State Police Union stands by ready to assist the legislature and other leaders.

March 20, 2015

**CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION**  
Andrew Matthews, Esq. - President

<http://www.khou.com/story/news/local/2015/02/04/quanell-x-trains-with-the-missouri-city-police-department/22901953/>