



State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission

State Capitol

210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509

Hartford, CT 06106

860-240-8555

March 20, 2015

Good Morning Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, Ranking Members and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Glenn Cassis, Executive Director of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC). I am submitting this testimony in support of the **HB 1104 An Act Concerning the Militarization of Law Enforcement Agencies**. The AAAC's mission is to improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut. I applaud the Judiciary Committee for being proactive by addressing this emerging concern.

Since the War on Drugs and more recently the domestic war on terrorism, local police departments and agencies in Connecticut have received military-style weapons and vehicles (tanks) from the federal government. This equipment was originally intended to be used by the military to protect citizens from foreign adversaries. When the drug cartels out armed local law enforcement, it was prudent for law enforcement to secure resources that matched these criminals. After 911, attention was directed towards the threat of terrorism in this country and military style weapons were available from the federal government. It is important that citizens in Connecticut remain protected. Regrettably, the nightmare of Ferguson, MO has demonstrated that there needs to be guidelines for the use of military style equipment on civilians.

HB 1104 will address concerns that help insure that the use of military-style equipment is both effective and does not place communities in harm's way. The public must be informed of the military equipment that local law enforcement procures and under what circumstances it will be

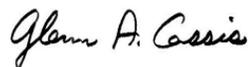
Our Mission

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

deployed. It must be used as a last resort. A detailed inventory of this equipment should be maintained by OPM and be available to the public through FOI. Detailed records should be maintained describing when, where and under what circumstances this equipment is deployed. The Commission is concerned that this equipment could be disproportionately deployed in poor neighborhoods or in communities with a majority of people of color reside. This was very evident this past summer in Ferguson.

Finally the AAAC believes that **HB 1104** can and should protect the public safety of the citizens of Connecticut. The Commission also believes that the guidelines should be adhered to insure that the rights of citizens are not abridged.

Thank you for accepting my testimony.



Glenn A. Cassis
Executive Director