

**Judiciary Committee
March 20, 2015
Senate Bill 1106**

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Forrest J. Beaulieu and I have been a Police Inspector with the Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice, Office of the Chief State's Attorney, for the past 3 years and I was a police officer for 29 years with the Town of Farmington prior to that.

I offer the following testimony in regards to Senate Bill 1106. While I support the intended purpose to add Police Inspectors within the Division of Criminal Justice to the already established list of Indemnified Law Enforcement Professionals under C.G.S. 53-39a, I cannot support the draft bill before the General Assembly at this time.

While SB 1106 does add Police Inspectors with the Division of Criminal Justice to this established list, it also shifts the financial burden of indemnifying *any* officer in the State of Connecticut who is charged with committing a crime in the course of their duties for which the charges are subsequently dismissed, or the officer is later found not guilty after a trial, from their employing governmental unit to the Division of Criminal Justice.

At a time when State agencies are facing hiring freezes, budget cuts and having to find other ways to save money and stretch their resources in an effort to balance the State's budget, this bill would place a tremendous financial burden on the Division of Criminal Justice to find the funds to indemnify any officer who is arrested and later acquitted of a crime or has the charges dismissed. Even one case could amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars to cover the economic loss and attorney's fees and costs incurred during the prosecution.

The Division of Criminal Justice currently has unfilled positions as a result of the latest hiring freeze, as well as a defunding of the successful Cold Case Unit and Shooting Task Force. If this bill passes in its current form, the Division of Criminal Justice could be required to find money it simply does not have, which would ultimately result in other programs being reduced or eliminated.

Another unintended consequence of this bill as proposed would be the possibility an officer who allegedly commits a crime in the course of their duties may not be prosecuted by the Division of Criminal Justice for fear of having to later indemnify that officer if the case is lost in court or additional evidence results in a dismissal of charges. Police officers are human and humans make mistakes, and sometimes those mistakes are criminal in nature and must be addressed within the criminal justice system. I feel deciding not to prosecute an individual because of the possibility of this additional expense, on top of the expenses already incurred by the Division of bringing that prosecution, is a bad precedent to set.

In addition, I believe this also has the potential to create a further mistrust of the police and the criminal justice system as a whole by those already skeptical, if they see the police as being immune from arrest and prosecution for violating the laws they are sworn to uphold.

Forrest J. Beaulieu
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