IN REFERNECE TO PROPOSED H.B. No. 5273 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PENALTY FOR ASSAULT OF AN OFF-DUTY POLCE OFFICER.

Dear Sen. Larson, Rep. Dargan, Sen. Guglielmo, Rep. Zupkus and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee,

On behalf of the men and women of law enforcement in the great state of Connecticut I would like to thank you for your time and consideration and for allowing me to say a few words on this matter.

My name is Officer Brian Tornga of the Greenwich, CT Police Department.

On the night of November 9th, 2012 I was one of three victims of a violent assault that took place at a local restaurant where I live and work.

This restaurant was closing for the night and the proprietor was attempting to close up as he was notifying his patrons that they would be required to finish any food or beverages they had as they would be closing shortly.

After numerous attempts to alert the last of the patrons, all that remained was a small gathering of individuals. These individuals did not acknowledge the proprietor's request to finish up and instead demanded more alcohol.

During the proprietor's conversation with them I noticed that they were becoming increasingly loud and aggressive towards him. I calmly approached the gathering to check on their welfare. Though I was off duty, not in uniform, and did not present my police identification, I was immediately identified by one of the individuals as a local Greenwich Police Officer.

In an attempt to de-escalate the situation I carried on a conversation with the individual who identified me as a Police Officer as he discussed names of other local officers he knew. During this conversation he asked me what kind of off duty Police Officer carried a firearm on his side out in public as he pointed to my right hip. I lifted my shirt and provided a clear view along with an explanation that the object he wrongly identified as a firearm was in fact my cellular phone which I carry attached to my right side waist belt. He refused to believe what I had shown him was a cellular phone.

Both the owner and I at this point believed that the argument had subsided, however one of the patrons stood up, grasped the proprietor from the front, and then threw him into a nearby booth striking him continuously in the face and head.

At this time I directed the bartender to contact 911 and responded to the aid of the proprietor in attempts to interrupt the direct serious physical injury he was sustaining to his face and head.

I was then approached by the individual that had previously identified me as a Police Officer and I sustained a direct, intentional kick from him to my left knee rendering me immediately unstable and I was knocked to the ground unable bear any weight on my leg. At this point they attempted to drag me to a separate part of the establishment as I sustained numerous kicks and strikes by the individuals, no longer able to protect myself or the proprietor.

They proceeded to take turns causing physical injury over a number of minutes by stomping on the proprietors face and chest as he lie defenseless on his back all the while taking turns kicking and striking me in the body and head.

While sustaining these injuries my cellular phone was ripped from my right side as one of the perpetrators stated his discontent that it was in fact a cellular phone and not a firearm as he had thought.

During this time a female patron tried breaking up the incident and was met with violence as well as one of the perpetrators pushed her and attempted to strike her.

Upon arrival of the Greenwich Police, all three men were taken into custody, arrested and transported to the Greenwich Police Department for processing. They were held on a $25,000.00 bond for charges including Assault on a Peace Officer as well as additional assault charges and breach of peace.

The proprietor of the restaurant and I were taken to the hospital where he was treated for a broken nose and numerous abrasions, swelling and bruising.

I sustained extensive internal knee trauma, over extension to my left thumb, numerous abrasions, swelling and bruising. I subsequently required surgery on my knee and months of physical rehabilitation leaving me unable to return to uniform duty for nearly a year.

During intake and processing all three arrestees spoke openly amongst themselves, in their native language, in detail of the events surrounding this incident which was recorded, translated and transcribed.

During this recording the arrestees spoke at length of their initiation of the assault, each individual's direct involvement, their knowledge of my profession as a law enforcement officer, their desire to have had more time to deliver more injury along with their intent to cause future serious physical bodily injury or "getting rid of me" should the charges against them be filed.

After processing, the Connecticut Bail Commissioner lowered the bond amount from $25,000.00 to $2,500.00 and all three violent arrestees were released from custody after posting a small portion of this bond.

After numerous months of delays, continuations and plea bargaining within the Stamford Superior Court these three violent offenders were granted Accelerated Rehabilitation with eighteen month of adult probation.

Police Officers in this country are truly never "off duty" and continuously put themselves in harm's way to protect the citizens of their community. It is imperative that we arrive at a conclusion for the future that protects the men and women of law enforcement at all times as they perform their duties, even out of uniform.

Thank you once again for your time and consideration on this matter.

Officer Brian Tornga #220
Greenwich Police Department
Greenwich, CT 06830