February 21, 2016

Public Safety and Security Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT  06106

Good morning, Senator Larson, Senator Guglielmo, Representative Verrazano, and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee, I am Dr. Dora Schriro, Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the following bills before you today and for considering these, our agency’s proposals.

SB 846- AAC Security Officer Licenses
This proposal would institute a 90-day grace period after the expiration of a security license for renewal and provide for a $25 late fee. Currently, there is no provision in statute that would allow for a grace period after a license expires. This means that any license holder who is more than 1 day late, must apply anew for licensure at a cost of approximately $165. In addition to the $165 in fees, his or her employment, as a security guard would also be affected. He or she would not be able to perform those duties pending the return of clean fingerprint results from the FBI.

HB 7094- AAC Fingerprinting Services For Criminal History Background Checks
This bill would authorize the Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to enter into agreements with independent contractors to solely provide fingerprinting services, not criminal history checks.
Between January 2016 and January 2017, the Connecticut State Police experienced a 98.5% increase, 16,436 additional sets of fingerprints, in volume. Presently, persons seeking a criminal history background check can go to any of the 11 Troops or to the State Police Bureau of Identification (SPBI) at DESPP’s Headquarters in Middletown. Because of this increase, an appreciably greater number of Troopers in the field on patrol must return to their Troops to perform the fingerprinting service resulting in fewer patrols. The increased demand for fingerprints at HQ is also contributing to a greater backlog at SPBI where the prints are processed. Agencies and entities that have fingerprinting completed by SPBI and CSP Troops include DPH, DCF, DMV, OEC, DDS, DRS, DSS, DOC, DOT, municipal law enforcement agencies, municipal boards of education, private schools, charter schools, judicial, security companies, etc.

If this bill is enacted, it would enable Troopers to spend more time in the field performing core law enforcement duties, as well as SPBI unit staff at HQ, to reduce the growing backlog in pending fingerprinting requests for processing.

**SB 845- An Act Concerning Security at Institutions of Higher Education.**
A number of private colleges and universities maintain a Security Department or a Department of Public Safety; their security staff are employees of the institutions they serve. Some of them are armed; in which case, carry a firearm either on a personal permit or under the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act for retired police personnel.

This proposal would require the Police Officer Standards and Training Council and the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges to develop a model training policy for armed security personnel at institutions of higher education and private occupational schools.

The bill would also require all institutions of higher education to consider any safety and security audits they have conducted when reviewing security protocol plans.

**HB 7093- An Act Concerning Notification to the Police Officer Standards and Training Council.**
Public Act No. 15-4 concerns both police officers dismissed for malfeasance or other serious misconduct and police officers who resigned or retired while under investigation for such malfeasance or other serious misconduct. These sections require any law enforcement unit from which such person is separated, if they become aware that the person has applied to another law enforcement agency, to inform that agency of such dismissal, resignation or retirement. Although POST is usually notified of an officer’s separation, POST is not usually notified whether or not the above circumstances apply. Since the conduct resulting in separation from the original agency may require de-certification, both the POST Council and DESPP believe that POST should be notified. This would also provide another valuable source of information for prospective hiring departments to consider when conducting the background investigation of any candidate.

Also, on your agenda today are HB 5671- An Act Concerning the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, and HB 5674- An Act Making the Division of State Police a Separate Agency. Although we oppose these proposals, I have discussed them both at length with Rep. Orange. I share her commitment to adopt the field’s best practices, and will continue to work closely with her towards the most efficient and effective outcomes.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I will answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Dora B. Schriro
Commissioner