Hello Committee Chair Winfield, Committee Chair Strafstrom, Vice Chair Kasser, Vice Chair Blumenthal and Ranking Members Kissel and Rebimbas.

My name is Anna Milliken. I live at 367 Elm st in New Haven, CT.

I am writing to comment on Draft LCO #3471: An Act Concerning Police Accountability. For too long, Connecticut’s police have ignored the civil rights of their residents and routinely targeted Black, Indigenous, and people of color with violence and criminalization. Because of a lack of accountability and oversight, Connecticut police have killed 21 people in the last five years, and have contributed to the frequent violation and harassment of Connecticut’s most marginalized communities. We cannot wait to make these changes to policing.

This draft legislation represents a start, but still falls short of the fundamental overhaul necessary to protect black, brown, and poor communities in Connecticut from police violence. For example, instances of “may” must be changed to “shall” to make this legislation binding. Police mental health assignments should be conducted annually instead of every five years. Random drug testing should similarly be enforced—for everything, including steroids.

Broadly, before this bill can be taken seriously as a good-faith effort to address this state’s scourge of police terror, it must intervene against the violence of the state’s correctional institutions and officers as well as police. For greater oversight and accountability of Connecticut’s correctional institutions, this bill must include:

1. **Correctional Reform.** Provisions of the bill aimed at holding police accountable MUST extend to correctional officers. Just as policing disproportionately damages black and brown people. In Connecticut, 71% of the people in prison are black and brown. In Northern Correctional, the State Prison for Juveniles, over 77% of the people incarcerated are black and brown.

2. **Independent Oversight.** The bill’s draft language calls for the creation of an Inspector General appointed by the Chief State’s Attorney. First, this is not independent oversight; this position has already been diminished by the General Assembly’s decision to have the Inspector General report to the Attorney General. Second, the position will not be independent given the overlap of responsibilities between the Inspector General and the Attorney General. Finally, the bill should be explicit in demanding that the Inspector General have the power to investigate police misconduct.

3. **A Shift in Funding from Corrections to Communities.** The bill’s focus on demilitarization does not go far enough. The bill must explicitly shift funding from policing into communities for education, health care, and jobs. The bill should explicitly prevent Connecticut from spending money on private prisons, a plan recently cited by the United Nations for human rights violations due to the excessive use of solitary confinement.

4. **Banning routine practices that inflict long-term trauma.** The bill’s focus on banning practices that inflict wanton and unnecessary violence during police stops is well warranted. Banning the use of chokeholds and moving from pepper spray to alternatives is a good start. But the bill should explicitly state that law enforcement is not allowed to use force to the point of unconsciousness, a practice that often understood to be torture, which can inflict life long trauma. The bill must also ban the use of prone and in-scope restraints—restraints that keep law enforcement officers in control of the situation.

5. **Qualified Immunity.** The use of qualified immunity to shield police from civil action is an essential component of this legislation; the abolition of qualified immunity is necessary to make police accountable.

Please stand on the right side of history and do your part to change this fundamentally broken and racist institution.

Sincerely,

Anna

---

Anna Milliken
She/her/hers
Yale University 2021
anna.milliken@yale.edu