Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am respectfully submitting this written testimony to express my concerns and objection to LCO #3471, an Act Concerning Police Accountability. I would like to provide some background on myself before getting into my causes for concern. I am a current Police Officer of almost 18 years in a City in Connecticut of approximately 70,000 people. The community is a mixture of all races. I am a member of our Crisis Negotiation Team and have previously worked as an FTO (Field Training Officer) and on my Department's Narcotics Team.

With this being said and with my background being known, I am in strong opposition to many parts of it this Bill. I feel that after reviewing all of the points put forward in the Bill, I have a hard time believing that any consultation was done with actual Police Officers to determine what will actually create change within our communities and Police Departments. There are points in this Bill that appear to be political "filler" with no point whatsoever. For example, point 14- Police Badge and Name Tag Identification Requirement. I don't know of any Department in the State in which Police Officers do not wear their name tag and badge on their outermost clothing. If this is found in specific Departments, this should be addressed with the Departments as this is a policy issue. Another point is requiring Officers to provide a receipt for traffic stops. I know in my Department and in most Departments, when an Officer conducts a motor vehicle stop, the Officer often explains to the operator of the motor vehicle why they are stopping that operator. In my Department, when we conduct a motor vehicle stop, we also complete a traffic stop statistic form with all the demographics of the operator. I guess you can argue that a receipt for the stop is already given in the form of a written warning or infraction if the Officer chooses to issue one. As far as quotas go, this is already law that quotas are illegal and simply do not happen. Whoever decided to put this in the Bill, simply did not do their research. This is the statute:

CT Gen Stat § 7-282d (2012)

One point that I feel is beneficial is the point requiring drug tests. This is a very good point to implement and helps weed out some of the Officers that may make questionable decisions. One point that has to be described more in this portion is what prescribed drugs could give a false positive that are actually acceptable.

Another point that I feel is beneficial mainly to Officers, is the Mental Health Assessment for Police. This could be a great resource for Police Officers especially if there are some Officers struggling with PTSD who may not realize the signs or may not know how to ask for help. My contention with this part of the bill though, is who pays for this assessment? What happens if an Officer is found to be suffering from some sort of mental health issue or is suffering from PTSD? Will the Officer receive treatment and remain employed? If the Officer is not determined to be employable anymore because of their condition, would they be pensioned off on a disability? Are these results FOI-able? This component alone can cost the cities alot.

Another point of contention I have with this Bill is point 18- Evaluation of Social Workers Responding to Certain Police Calls. While this is a great idea and thought and would certainly take alot of work off of Police Officers, this is extremely dangerous for Social Workers! I have often seen first hand how these calls regarding mental health or narcotics can change in the blink of an eye! If you want to have a Social Worker go with an Officer, that is one thing, but to have only Social Workers respond to these calls would be catastrophic!

Yet another point of contention I have with this Bill is point 40- Prohibition on Police Using Military Equipment. This makes no sense and puts Officers and the Public at risk. Some Departments receive
watercraft from the Government. This is nothing but beneficial in the fact that it helps people out on the water that Police may not be able to get to or may not be able to afford in terms of purchasing watercraft. The watercraft goes to directly help those in distress on our various waters. In terms of night vision, my Department has night vision and infrared goggles. This is extremely beneficial in times when people go missing and may be in a wooded area. Those tools help us to help the public. I have seen this first hand and it is a great tool to help the community. In terms of firearms, there was a bank robbery back in California many years ago where the bank robbers were armed with automatic weapons. They went on a shooting rampage throughout the City and the Police were severely overwhelmed because they did not have the weapons to combat these criminals. Officers were going into gun stores to get more firearms to try and stop these criminals. So for those that don't like the "look" of Police looking like the military is not a reason for presenting this point.

Finally, my major point of contention is requiring Police Officers to carry personal liability insurance and Qualified Immunity! This simply is ridiculous. Officers are asked to put their lives on the line and to make split second decisions to preserve and protect life, as well as to react to deadly force situations. The last thing the public wants is for an Officer to have in the back of their mind, that they may lose their homes, livelihoods, families, etc. due to frivolous lawsuits, this could be disastrous for Police and the public. This will create a major strain on Cities and Towns as well because it will be very difficult to retain Officers, and hire new Officers knowing that they are not protected. If this is being discussed, then we should remove qualified immunity for judges and prosecutors as well. Make it even across the board. The main point I have heard brought up was that Doctors carry liability insurance. Doctors also make several hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to do their jobs, so this is not out of the realm of possibility for them. For Police Officers who's average salary is around $80,000 a year, and some making much less, this is just not feasible.

I could go on for pages and pages giving examples from my almost 18 years as a Police Officer in which certain points would be beneficial and where many points would be detrimental to the profession. One thing I noticed in listening to the almost 12 hours of testimony, is that many people are looking to hold the Police accountable, which we should be, but at what point do we hold the public accountable for their actions? In several instances, I heard many people over and over talking about people dying in Police pursuits, or dying at the hands of Police due to use of force situations, etc... My point being that when you are contacted by Police, you must comply with the orders given. That point is not the time to plead your case as if you were in court. If arrested, you will have your opportunity and time in court, but that particular time is not the time to fight your case. If an Officer goes to pull your vehicle over, pull over and deal with the matter, don't engage Officers in a high speed pursuit which puts everyone at risk. We have to hold the public accountable for their actions just as much as they are trying to hold Police Officers accountable for our actions. I have always held true to a personal belief that I treat others as I would want my family treated, as cliche as that sounds. In almost 18 years of Policing, I have been very successful in developing a rapport with my community and many that know me, trust me as an Officer because of the way they were treated by me. I have been able to successfully de-escalate volatile situations because of that rapport that I have built with individuals in my community. I have provided food for people that were hungry, clothes for families that have lost everything in house fires, and a listening ear for sometimes hours when people are going through a tough time or having a mental break. There are many Officers that have done the same things. We often don't videotape it, or publicize it because that's not what we are looking for. We are not looking for the recognition, we are carrying through on our beliefs of why we became Police Officers. In listening to the testimonies, some people would have you think that Officers are strapping on their duty belts and lacing up their boots with the intention to go out and harm people during their shift. I can guarantee you that no Officer goes out with this intention. No Officer wants to get into a use of force situation or use deadly force in any way. That
is an absolute last resort when all else fails. Sometimes there is not a chance to use all tools possible to de-escalate a situation. In the instances where someone pulls out a knife and begins to charge an Officer, there is no time to deploy a taser, or pepper spray, or talk to the person. I have seen far too many times where a regular routine call where everything is calm, turns upside down and now becomes a life or death situation in the blink of an eye because unbeknownst to the Police Officer, the person they are talking to took PCP earlier and is going through highs and lows and their mental state is severely altered where they don't know what they are doing.

I ask that you talk to real Police Officers and take their points into account. Go on some "ride alongs" in various Departments to see what we are dealing with on a daily basis, but don't look to put a Bill into place as a knee jerk reaction. We all agree that what took place in Minnesota was wrong and should not have happened. I don't think you'll find any Police Officer who thinks that type of Police work is OK. Take the time to put together a Bill that is mutually beneficial and well thought out, not one such as this is which is thrown together in a manner to appease constituents in a bid to get re-elected. While this may be a political matter for some looking to get re-elected, this is our livelihoods that we have to live with every day we get into a patrol car. Our jobs are already extremely difficult, which we all know and all signed up for, but don't make our jobs any more difficult than they need to be because of a hastily put together Bill that many are looking for quick approval for. Take the time and get it right with input from ALL!

Respectfully submitted,

Mike (Last name omitted for safety reasons given my profession)