

Dear Task Force Members:

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening.

I was born overseas, and I have lived in CT for over 50 years. I never thought I would see the day where our police officers are being scrutinized to this level when most of our police officers are good people who put on their uniforms to serve their communities all while putting their lives on the line.

Recently, we have seen unrest in this country. While Mr. Floyd's death was difficult to watch, we cannot presume most of our police officers would conduct themselves as the police officers did in Minneapolis. I do not believe any police officer or residents in CT approved of what occurred to Mr. Floyd. That being said, we cannot allow this current culture of anti-police to paint all police officers as villains because most police officers do their job and protect their citizens.

I have a few concerns regarding how the Police Accountability Bill was handled by our leaders who took drastic measures that will ultimately affect the way our police patrol our streets and protect us.

First, under the Police Accountability Act, there will be an overwhelming number of frivolous lawsuits which will inundate our court system because these lawsuits will no longer be dismissed early in the judicial process. This will only subject ethical officers to be personally at risk of litigation and will force them to settle even with if these claims are baseless. It is for that reason the Supreme Court recognized qualified immunity 50 years ago because our law enforcement makes split-second decisions in dangerous situations. Law enforcement should not have to worry about being sued personally. Police departments can conduct a full investigation to see if an officer deviated from protocol and make their decision based on their investigation.

As we have seen in the Breonna Taylor case, there was a rush to judgment without allowing the process to take its course and now that the facts have been revealed, we see what the public was told was not completely accurate and the result was a lot of raised emotions, rioting and two police officers shot. We must be reminded that the 5th Amendment of our Constitution states that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty and that defendant is entitled to due process. It appears that in today's world, it is the complete opposite.

Another concern is the Police Accountability Bill will deter men and women from becoming police officers. I believe we may see less recruiting and more retirements as we have recently seen in other states. Clearly, we need police presence in our neighborhoods to keep the crime out of our neighborhoods.

I also find it concerning that the Police Accountability Bill was not endorsed by both parties but rather passed at unprecedented speed. We are discussing men and women who protect the public so there should have been more discussions and public input before pushing this bill into law. Legislation of this nature should have serious consideration because of the impact it would have in our communities. It is of my opinion that this is political, and politics should not be a part of this equation.

In addition, there is some discussions about defunding the police or reallocating funds both by our leaders and residents. This should not even be considered. If anything, as a taxpayer, I believe our police funding should be number one since we look to the police to keep us safe. I want to know my family is safe and will be protected.

Finally, I think it is time to focus more on who are these perpetrators and why are they committing these crimes. We cannot blame the police for these perpetrators' bad behavior. If you are arrested, I recommend you don't resist – we have due process in this country and look to our judicial system to ensure each citizen in this country has due process.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Stacey Christoforides

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