

CT. Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force
Public Act 19-90 Sec.6

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

provided by
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September 25, 2020

Good morning. I am Dr. Sue Tenorio, a lifelong educator. As a regular listener of these public sessions, I begin by thanking the Task Force for its professionalism and sensitivity in conducting the sessions.

My background includes serving as the Chairperson of the first Hartford Civilian-Police Review Board established by then-Mayor, Carrie Saxon Perry. As a result, I have had direct experience hearing in-person citizen complaints that represent many of the key provisions of the current legislation.

Conscious of time limits, I will address and make recommendations in 4 areas that seem most concerning:

1. the office and role of the Inspector General
2. data collection, analysis and reporting
3. use of force standards
4. qualified immunity

1. Inspector General

The individual selected for this role must have impeccable credentials of fairness and integrity as well as complete independence from city/town officials. With legislative oversight, s/he should select Review Board members who are diverse in race-ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs. The Inspector General, staff and Board meetings must be housed away from Police Head quarters in order to maintain credibility with the public. Also, the Inspector General must oversee data gathering and analysis in annual reports to the Legislature, identifying trends and establishing an early alert system.

2. Data collection, analysis and reporting

Data to be gathered should include, by individual officer(s) [identified by a code number] follows:

- Firearm discharges (refers to number of times an officer fires his/her weapon);
- Race-ethnicity of any person shot, wounded or killed;
- Number of complaints and/or lawsuits filed against individual officers, charges, number of officers involved, outcomes and if successful lawsuits, total amount of damages paid out by the city/town.

3. Use of Force

Physical force used by officers should be restricted to the most narrow possible range of situations, e.g. no striking or kicking citizens in areas where permanent injuries can result. Force used should be defensive not offensive. Use of Mace or taser should be restricted.

Use of any of these actions by officers should be included in a written report filed by officers and automatically supervised and reviewed by higher ranking officers.

Police Departments should establish an early warning system to identify officers who are involved in an inordinate number of incidents that include the use of inappropriate---specific, observable--- force against citizens. Such incidents should be investigated and if verified, the officers involved should be charged and disciplined by revoking or suspending his/her certification.

4. Qualified Immunity

This being perhaps the most contentious provision, caution is urged. Threats of mass resignations by officers, if qualified immunity is removed, are time worn and frankly overblown. In addition, mass filings of lawsuits by citizens is a scare tactic that is not borne out historically and, in general, citizen lawsuits are typically unsuccessful.

Less mentioned is the cost that is paid out by police departments if and when officers are found guilty. Like everyone else, I am a tax paying citizen and my taxes support, in part, police departments. I find it distressing and offensive that my taxes are used to pay for police misconduct. It is not acceptable.

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Rev.9/25/20