

# DOVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Via e-mail to: [Testimony.HWMJudiciary@mahouse.gov](mailto:Testimony.HWMJudiciary@mahouse.gov)

Dear Chair Aaron Michlewitz and Chair Claire Cronin:

Please accept the following testimony with regard to SB2820 - An Act to reform police standards and shift resources to build a more equitable, fair and just commonwealth that values Black lives and communities of color.

I hope that this letter is one of hundreds that you will receive in an attempt to correct some of the portions of the Senate Bill that will negatively impact policing in the Commonwealth for years to come.

The Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association has been working for close to a decade to enact a POST certification system that failed to be considered by the Legislature at least two separate times that I am aware. The version in the bill is onerous and unwieldy. We need straightforward guidelines that will allow Chiefs to remove officers that do not deserve to wear a badge. We all want the same things here, so I am surprised that the MCOPA input was not sought on this as it was jammed through a late night session with no public debate or comment.

This bill will negatively impact departments of all sizes across the Commonwealth. Even small departments such as Dover will struggle with the modifications to qualified immunity. As written, the legislation will encourage legal harassment of our officers, change the way officers interact with the public, and drain already precious and scarce resources from Municipalities that will have to defend these suits.

Also, one segment in particular stands out to me as a department that relies heavily on strong relationships with our schools. Section 49, lines 1101-1115, prohibits schools and school resource officers from sharing information with the other police department members in dealing with students. The only reason there have been no school shootings is that schools are closed due to the pandemic. Tampering with the relationships that many of us have worked so hard to forge is tantamount to asking for more violence in our schools. Our schools should be safe, and this section will threaten that safety.

I would like to close by stressing that I am proud to be a Police Chief in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, where we are far ahead of many states in our policing goals, strategies, and operations. Our officers are educated, trained, and held to a very high standard, as evidenced by the lack of national headline news out of Massachusetts based upon an officer or an interaction with the public. That is not just luck...it is a concerted effort by the leaders of our profession in this state to address issues we see happening elsewhere in the country and the world, and get in front of them. In the effort to address bias and prejudice in the forefront of the news, the Senate has done what they say they are trying to prevent: classifying a group as bad, or evil, or malicious, based solely upon the fact that we wear the same uniform as others that have committed horrific acts. Please know that there are so many police officers in your Commonwealth that are motivated to do the right thing, each and every day, treating the public with respect, compassion and empathy.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these brief thoughts. These are the two portions of the bill that I chose to highlight. The Mass Chiefs of Police have put forth a well written opinion on the legislation with many more concerns, and I hope that you will consider their smart and well-reasoned explanations of the issues we have as a group with this legislation. And finally, please know that ultimately, we all want the same thing.

Respectfully,



Peter A. McGowan

Chief of Police

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