



TOWN OF HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS POLICE DEPARTMENT

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MICHAEL A. MASON
Chief of Police

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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:

As a Chief for a smaller police department in Western Massachusetts, I have the ability to talk to all of my officers weekly, know them all and their families and be able to have frank and open discussions that maybe larger department Chief's don't have the luxury of having. As I'm sure you are all aware, views on policing have changed and officers now contend with some of the worst times many of us can ever remember. This is difficult enough when trying to keep the morale of officers from falling so low they want to leave this profession. It's worse when those in control of the narrative for our Commonwealth paint them all with a broad brush and make no distinction whatsoever between our officers and those who commit atrocities like what happened in Minnesota. Make no mistake, we are in favor of reform, transparency and we will support efforts to ensure that nothing like that can happen again. But it must be done

responsibly and taking into consideration that you have some of the finest law enforcement officers in the country here in Massachusetts.

I've spent more time trying to encourage my great officers from leaving in the last several weeks than I ever thought I might in my entire career. And in a smaller department, even a few officers leaving will be catastrophic to staffing. Add to that the fact that recruitment numbers are already at an all-time low, this will be detrimental to law enforcement as a whole. This is almost wholly attributed to the thoughtless and kneejerk reaction of the Senate bill to re-word qualified immunity. While there are many other parts of the bill which are insulting and possibly even harmful to the amazing officers in this Commonwealth, none reach the pinnacle of threatening their livelihoods in a profession where sometimes their actual lives are already in jeopardy.

In the interest of time, rather than continue, I would respectfully request that you read the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association's full response to this bill but pay the closest of attention to Section 10 on qualified immunity. Please do not confuse this well written tenet which has stood for many years with complete and total immunity. They are not the same. Qualified immunity is a reasonable and well-established law and there is no reason to adjust it, unless the goal is simply punishment of the police. And if that is where we are headed, then I no longer recognize the amazing Commonwealth that I swore to protect.

Respectfully,

Michael A. Mason