



Holliston Police Department

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Chair Aaron Michlewitz
Chair Claire Cronin
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

Re: S.2820 Reforming Police Standards

Dear Chairs Michlewitz and 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 police leader I feel obligated to express my concern with many of the provisions included in Senate Bill 2820 and hope the House of Representatives will take an approach focused on common sense and not an approach that is biased to and reactionary to certain political movements. I believe there is a better solution than what is being presented and hope that we can collectively work together to develop reasonable solutions regarding concerns over policing practices and operations. It is imperative that these efforts reflect a balanced, strategic approach to combating crime and prioritizing community safety. Senate Bill 2820 is both misguided and shortsighted and will most certainly have adverse effects and negative impacts for years to come.

Massachusetts has always been ahead of the curve when it comes to police tactics and training and I welcome the idea of additional training for our officers. The general concept of establishing a Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) program is wholeheartedly supported by many police chief across the Commonwealth. We understand that this system would set minimum training standards, regulate training programs and curricula, and set standards for maintenance of police licensure or certification. Bringing advanced training programs and workshops to our officers in an effort to help ensure accuracy and relevance to today’s issues is extremely important to us. I also support a system that would require departments to track fired and problematic officers to ensure they are not unknowingly hired when leaving one department for another in the same or a different state. I believe a POST system would increase uniformity, standardization, transparency, and professionalism within police training.

The most problematic part of Senate Bill 2820, not only for law enforcement in the Commonwealth, but for all public employees, appears in section 10(c). This section of the bill essentially calls for a re-write of the “Qualified Immunity (QI)” provision that shields public officials who are performing discretionary functions from civil liability. In Massachusetts, public officials are not liable under the Massachusetts Civil Rights Act

for their discretionary acts unless they have violated a right under federal or state constitutional or statutory law that was “clearly established” at the time. It is understood that qualified immunity does not serve to protect illegal actions by police officers. However, it is recognized that it safeguards all public officials in situations where the law is unclear and does not give them adequate guidance. Abolishing or modifying qualified immunity will have important negative unintended consequences for all Massachusetts citizens, courts, and public employees, not just police officers.

In closing, it my hope that members of the House of Representatives recognize the fact that our police officers put their lives on the line each and every day. When the men and women of our community experience an emergency, our police are there to serve. We don’t hesitate to jump in and protect the public when called upon. I, along with police officers from across this nation, condemn the terrible actions that occurred to Mr. Floyd in Minneapolis, but punishing the men and women of Massachusetts law enforcement by passing irresponsible legislation is both unjust and unfair.

I am extremely proud to serve alongside the many law enforcement officers across our Commonwealth. Our officers have been selected based on their character, integrity, and values and are proud of the communities that they serve. As a Police Chief, it is my our hope that the residents of Massachusetts feel secure in knowing that our law enforcement officers are highly trained, professional, and most of all, accountable. I assure you that we remain committed to providing the fair and impartial policing that our communities both expect and deserve.

I respectfully request that the House of Representatives take many of these items under careful consideration as you put forward a bill for your members to consider.

Respectfully,



Matthew J. Stone
Chief of Police