



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MA 02133-1054

MICHAEL J. SOTER
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
8TH WORCESTER DISTRICT

Committees:
Children, Families and
Persons with Disabilities
Economic Development and
Emerging Technologies
Municipalities and Regional Government
Public Health

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Chairman Michlewitz
Chairwoman Cronin
Member of the House Committee on Ways and Means
House Members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary
Boston, MA 02133

RE: S2820 - 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

House Members,

First, I would like to commend House leadership, the House Committee on Ways and Means, and the House members on the Joint Committee on the Judiciary for their commitment to a fair and equitable public hearing process.

In my role as State Representative, I'm committed to serving those who put me here.

This bill has the potential to drastically alter the way society is run in the Commonwealth. While I genuinely appreciate the house opening this bill up to a public hearing, there is no getting around the fact that this is a rushed piece of legislation. Those colleagues in the Senate who called for this bill to slow down and be reviewed by a diverse group of individuals and organizations are not off base with their request. Creating a commission to study the bill is the most sensible way to proceed with this piece of legislation.

I'm astounded and disappointed in the way the Senate handled the debate of this bill. I believe we have a leadership opportunity here to slow down the process and restore faith within our constituencies, proving to them that we're not here to push through ill-considered legislation. We have the opportunity to show our constituents that the government works for them and we have the best interests of all parties at heart.

While this bill is far from perfect, there are many aspects that should be included in a police reform bill for Massachusetts. However, the good does not outweigh the bad. It is not wise for the Commonwealth to begin to pull back their support for law enforcement officers and leave

them out to dry in the legal system. Those who protect, serve, and find themselves in the most intense situations should not have to second guess every action they take during the most intense moments of the job. We need to continue to provide our officers with the tools they need to keep the men, women, and children safe within our communities.

To that point, our law enforcement officers need to be well equipped with the most up to date and comprehensive training possible. This, in turn, will allow our cops to diffuse hostile and stress inducing situations most effectively without the concern of further escalation. Proposed changes to our Police Officer Standards and Accreditation Committee has the opportunity to risk the effectiveness and further development of such training.

I ask that this bill not be reported favorably, and a Commission set up to study the impacts of this bill and to outline the real needs of this state in regard to police reform.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Soter
State Representative
8th Worcester District