

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

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COMMITTEES:

Joint Committee on Higher Education
Joint Committee on Revenue
Joint Committee on Consumer
Protection & Professional Licensure
House Committee on Bonding, Capital
Expenditures & State Assets

Testimony.HWMJudiciary@mahouse.gov

July 16, 2020

Dear Chair Michlewitz and Chair Cronin:

I am writing to express my appreciation for your commitment to craft legislation to reform police practices. I strongly support efforts to advance legislation that includes several House bills, which serve as the basis of S2820, and in particular, legislation which reflects the Black and Latino Legislative Caucus' legislative priorities around training, certification, H3277, and Rep. Miranda's recently filed bill, HD 5128, on data collection and the use of force. As a co-sponsor of H1538, I also support prohibiting the use of facial recognition surveillance technology and believe including this as a banned intervention in this bill would be an appropriate measure given the controversy around this intervention, charges of racial bias in its implementation and its failure to accurately identify Black, indigenous, and people of color.

As I understand it, our efforts to reform police practices need to focus on identifying and clearly articulating a set of standards for public safety and professional police behavior and practices. To achieve implementation and real reform, we need to build the capacity of police officers to meet these standards through training that increases their knowledge, comfort and skills to apply newly prioritized practices.

Our legislation needs to focus on

- 1) Supporting police officers to gain a better understanding of expectations for professional police standards and appropriate police practices including -- and especially -- as it relates to use of force and preventing the excessive use of force and why these standards are needed (specifically around the historic experience of communities of color with these tactics);
- 2) creating, requiring and ensuring (ongoing) universal police training that reflect these priorities and expectations and builds police officers knowledge and skills to apply these alternative practices;
- 3) developing a certification process that rests on all officers successfully completing training as well as continuing education that allows for re-certification; and
- 4) ensuring accountability for individual actions that are not aligned with these expectations that would be the basis for a decertification process and, if appropriate, legal consequences.

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I oppose Governor Baker's proposal that incentives be provided to police who receive training on de-escalation tactics. Capacity-building training should not cherry pick individual officers to benefit from professional support. We need to approach this new era by creating and enforcing new universal expectations around professional police behavior which would be integrated into new mandatory trainings, a certification program, and job descriptions for all officers. Professional behavior should not be subject to individual interest or potential financial incentive.

I support your efforts to build the capacity of the police to meet the community's priorities through: training (POST), standards of professional behavior (on de-escalation skills, new standards for use of force and a duty to intervene), and accountability (certification, a preponderance of evidence triggering de-certification, and Rep. Day's H3277 an act to secure civil rights through the courts of the Commonwealth.)

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns.

With much appreciation for your diligence.



MINDY DOMB
State Representative, 3rd Hampshire District