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Re: 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, SB 2820.

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 know you are in receipt of correspondence co-signed by Chief Brian Kyes, President of Massachusetts Major City Chiefs, and Chief Jeff Farnsworth, President of Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association. Rather than belabor what has already been stated, and although there are other areas in the bill I wish they had addressed, I will let stand their testimony as there is far more ground on what we all agree with than what we disagree. If you begin on where we agree rather than on where we disagree, we will gain far more ground.

I would like to engage you more from the human standpoint. First of all, let me state I appreciate the House's willingness to listen to testimony regarding this important issue. A meaningful discussion on race relations, social justice, inequities in society, has been long overdue. What's unfortunate is it took the grotesque, criminal act of a Minneapolis police officer to bring that discussion to the forefront. What does that say about us, as a society, that we have been unwilling to address these important issues until the public display of the worst our profession has to offer? And how very easy has it been for our leaders to inaccurately and despicably lay this at the feet of law enforcement. You want to make it easier for good cops to get rid of bad cops? Please, we welcome it. You want to mandate training to law enforcement officers on the history of slavery, lynching, racist institutions and racism in the United States, then mandate it in every classroom and public and private industry. To do otherwise is shameful and insulting.

There are so many discussions that need to take place. That first discussion however is an inward discussion. What have "I" done to arrive us in this place we find ourselves in? How can "I" help to improve this situation we find ourselves in? As a human being, I will engage in that discussion. As a law enforcement professional, I will engage in that discussion. I am however dismayed that some in our society, have an unwillingness towards self-assessment but instead project their responsibility onto this noble profession, which is then emboldened by our leaders with a lack of response.

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What the Senate has done, in my opinion, has not responded to anything that is taking place in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Instead they have reacted to an unwatchable event that took place over 1,000 miles away, that has triggered misdirected and hateful actions towards the guardians of our communities by joining the loud minority and labeled them racists and the root of all evil. As a result, we have not engaged in discussions followed by effective and meaningful action needed to address identified issues at home.

What is unfortunate by reacting instead of responding; the very essence of what we all seek, meaningful improvement, is not achieved. Reacting is done with emotion, and as a result, too often, causes more lines of division. Response is done with thought. Thought involves bringing all stake holders to the table. Thought involves the impact of any decisions being made. Thought involves beginning with common ground and seek to fill the voids rather than widening them. Thought involves a sustainable plan with checks and balances. Thought involves leadership. Please do not react. Respond and lead.

Respectfully,



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