



Salisbury Police Department

Thomas W. Fowler, *Chief of Police*

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July 17, 2020

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 police chief for the past eight years and a police officer for the past thirty-three years, I have some serious concerns with Senate bill 2820 as amended. Please consider how the following will impact how my officers do their job and how it will effect public safety in the Commonwealth.

SECTION 4 (line 230): Under (iv), the provision states that there shall be training in the area of the "history of slavery, lynching, racist institutions and racism in the United States." While we certainly welcome any and all training that enhances the professionalism this legislation mandates, it makes one assume that all police officers in the Commonwealth are inherently racists.

SECTION 6 (line 272): In terms of the establishment of a POST (Peace Officer Standards and Training) Program, the various police chief's organizations here in our state wholeheartedly support the general concept. I came from a POST state eight years ago. The issue as I see it is the Senate Bill makes reference to Accreditation. I work for an accredited department and Massachusetts has a strong accreditation program. While, in my opinion every department should strive for accreditation it should not be linked by the acronym POSAC.

SECTION 10(c) (line 570): Section 10: the limitations on qualified immunity have long reaching effects not only on police officers but municipalities and other municipal employees. This has been a long standing legal principle that must not be tampered with.


SECTION 49 (line 1101-1115): This provision prevents school department personnel and school resource officers (who actually work for police departments), from sharing information with law enforcement officers –including their own agency –when there are ongoing specific unlawful incidents involving violence or otherwise. This quite frankly defies commonsense. Please remember the series of school shootings that have recently occurred. SROs have been an important component to community police and trust building and to refer to them as eyes and ears of the police state in our schools goes against the basic mission of School Resource Officers.

SECTION55(line 1272): Please know that in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts we do not train, recommend or advocate for choke holds or any type of neck restraint. That said, there needs to be a deadly force exception to eliminate any possible confusion that this could cause for an officer who is in the midst of struggling for their life and needs to avail themselves of any and all means that may exist to survive and to control the subject. This is a reasonable and fairly straightforward recommendation.

I appreciate the opportunity to weigh in with our concerns and recommendations and hope that you would give due consideration to what I have outlined above. Should you have any follow up questions and/or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me in the days or hours that lay ahead. I respect that time is of the essence regarding this important legislation and stand ready to assist if and when called upon.

I can be contacted by email at tfowler@salisburypolice.com or 978-225-2061.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas W. Fowler", with a long, sweeping underline.

Thomas W. Fowler
Chief of Police

Cc: Representative James M. Kelcourse, 1st Essex