

TOWN OF WEST SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS



OFFICE OF POLICE DEPARTMENT

26 CENTRAL STREET, STE 22
WEST SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS 01089-2780



Phone: (413) 263-3210-0
Fax: (413) 731-6798
Voice Mail: (413) 263-3219

G. Paul Connor
Chief of Police

July 17, 2020

Re; Concerns to Senate 2820 as Amended

Dear Chairwoman Cronin and Chairman Michlewitz:

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 would like to express the same concerns that were eloquently written by Chief Kyes and Chief Farnsworth. I would like to follow-up on their letter and state my own concerns. The "Qualified Immunity" issue is obviously one of contention. I am concerned that this provision's removal or even weakening Qualified Immunity would disturb such an important safeguard that protects everyone from a flood of lawsuits. The removal or weakening of this provision would lead to office's not relying on their training and education, but rather hesitating and wondering if they would be sued for actions that would be perceived by a reasonable officer to have been done properly. As a police department that promotes proactive policing to meet our community's needs, I feel the weakening of the Qualified Immunity provision would severely impact the morale of Law Enforcement, which would impact the quality of life in all communities.

It is my belief that some of the provisions are detrimental to public safety and need a thorough review by not only the community but also from those in Law Enforcement that will be tasked with implementing and carrying out these amendments. Including Law Enforcement and the Community in any changes would allow for everyone to work in collaboration and corporation with one another to build better police practices. I believe this to be an opportunity for change to be done, however, the change must be done correctly and not as a knee jerk reaction. Massachusetts Officers are some of the most highly trained and educated officers in the country and any drastic changes could and would have an unforeseen ripple effect in a negative capacity. Thank you for your time.

Chief G. Paul Connor
West Springfield Police Department
26 Central Street
West Springfield, Ma. 01089