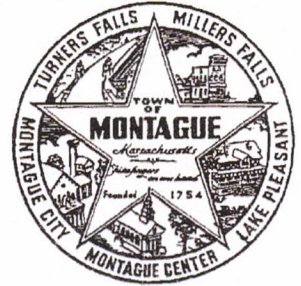




Montague Police Department
180 Turnpike Road
Turners Falls, MA 01376

(413) 863-8911
(413) 863-3210 (fax)



Chief Christopher P. Williams

TO: Chairwoman Cronin and Chairman Michlewitz

FROM: Chief Christopher P. Williams

RE: Concerns to Senate 2820 as Amended

DATE: 7/17/20

The senate version of this bill as written will seriously undermine public safety by limiting police officer's ability to do their jobs while simultaneously allowing provisions to protect criminals. Furthermore, the process employed by the Senate to push this through with such haste without public hearing or input of any kind was extremely undemocratic and nontransparent.

Police across the commonwealth support uniform training standards and policies and have been requesting more training for several years.

The Senate version of regulatory board is unacceptable as it strips officers of the due process rights and does away with protections currently set forth in collective bargaining agreements and civil service law. The Senate created a board that is dominated by anti-police groups who have a long-detailed record of biases against law enforcement and preconceived punitive motives toward police. I do not support any bill that does not include the same procedural justice safeguards members of the communities we serve demand and enjoy.

The proposed makeup of the oversight board is one sided and biased against law enforcement. It is unlike any of the 160 other regulatory boards across the Commonwealth and as constructed incapable of being fair and impartial.

What the Senate has tried to do is pass a knee jerk reaction to an incident which occurred half a country away that everyone agrees was egregious; I and all Massachusetts Chiefs quickly condemned it.

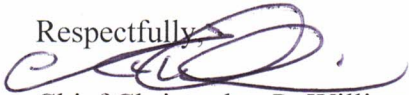
Massachusetts police officers are among the highest educated, trained and professional in this country.

This bill directly attacks qualified immunity and due process. Qualified immunity does not protect bad officers; it protects the good officers from civil lawsuits. We should want our officers to be able to act to protect our communities without fear of being sued at every turn, otherwise why would they put themselves at risk? A large majority of law enforcement officers do the right thing and are great officers, yet there is a real push to end qualified immunity to open them up to frivolous lawsuits because of the actions of a few who, by their own actions, would not be covered by qualified immunity anyway. It just doesn't make any sense why we are endangering the livelihood of many of the actions of a few.

Changes to qualified immunity would be unnecessary if the legislature adopted a uniform statewide standard and bans unlawful use of force techniques which all police personnel unequivocally support.

If the senate bill is passed in its current form, the costs to municipalities and State will skyrocket from frivolous lawsuits. In doing so would have a devastating impact on budgets statewide?

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C. Williams', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Chief Christopher P. Williams