



# Bellingham Police Department

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CHIEF OF POLICE  
GERARD L. DAIGLE

Thursday, July 16, 2020

Chairman Michlewitz  
Chairwoman Cronin  
Members of the House Committee on Way and Means  
House Members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary  
Boston, MA. 02133

Dear Chair Aaron Michlewitz and Chair Clair 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.

House Members,

There is nothing but pride in the career of being a police officer in the Town you were born and brought up in. As a Police Chief for the last 20 years, I have seen many changes which have impacted how we police our community and how we must stand by, and educate our Officers out there, who are putting their lives on the line on a daily basis for the residents our community.

Changes in policing do occur. In my over 35 years of policing these changes always came with some manner of respect and cooperation of our Law Enforcement partners and politicians. We witnessed changes in policing due to September 11<sup>th</sup>, anthrax, Covid-19, etc. just to name a few.

As leaders, we adjusted our style of operations and carried on with our heads held high with support and admiration that we were doing what was best for our community and our Police Officers.

How anybody in their right mind can sit back and push legislation as a knee jerk reaction, that throws all of us in the law enforcement profession under the bus is beyond me. Change may be needed, but so is serious, long discussion on what the impacts will be and changes that have plenty of input from those on the front lines who are impacted the most on a day by day basis would only seem to make common sense.

In an age where we want to recruit a better pool of candidates for the job of being a Police Officer in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, taking away or scaling back Qualified Immunity is not the way to go. The message to our Officers will be, go out there, put your lives on the line, "But" be aware that we will only have your back or stick up for you in certain situations.

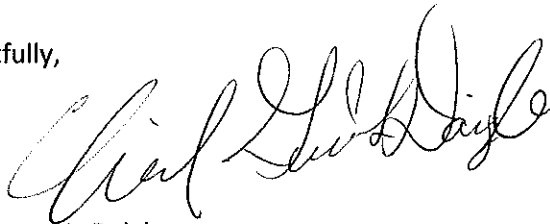
No one in their right mind would want to be a Police Officer today if you are going to mess with Qualified Immunity. Officers will do the bare minimum on the streets which is not fair to the citizens and business owners of our great community.

Officers will not react in situations where they are "in doubt" about their Cities or Towns having their backs. Too much thought and not enough action tends to get people hurt and situations will turn worse.

Messing with Qualified Immunity and Defunding the Police, are probably two of the most ridiculous concepts I've ever heard of in my over 35 years of policing. Let's hope our legislators do what's best, making a well-informed decision, not based on emotions, or knee jerk reactions, or bowing down to political pressure without giving this major reform some serious thought.

This needs to be a process that will take some time, and some intelligent discussion from many sides. As a group, the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police has always fought for more money for training our Officers. This to me would be a far better way to go, than some of the ideas expressed in SB2820.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chief Gerard L. Daigle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chief Gerard L. Daigle  
Bellingham Police Department