

16 July 2020

Senator Aaron Michlewitz
Senator Clair Cronin
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Chair Aaron Michlewitz and Chair Claire Cronin:

My name is Michael Perkins, I am the Chief of Police for the Town of Cummington, located the western hills of Hampshire County.

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 am extremely concerned the impact SB2820 will have on my small rural community. While we are at a pivotal time with so many calling for change in the way policing is done in today's twenty first century society, I implore you as legislators to pause and really focus on the what these changes would do for our Commonwealth.

Shifting resources such as funding, away from policing is of great concern to me.

In a small rural community, policing is about engaging community members, answering questions, hearing concerns and being able to respond in time of need. These relationships were built over time and often supplemented through grant funding. This allowed department members to be visible in the community and participate in a variety of community events. The Cummington Police Department also received supplemental funding to target aggressive driving on the ten mile stretch of Route 9 that runs through town. Both Community Policing and Traffic Safety funding have been already been "shifted away" from the small rural agencies and now there is a call to shift even more funding away???

In rural communities' police are so much more than just the police. We are emergency medical responders, community care givers, active listeners trained to listen when someone has a concern, we are a shoulder to cry on as we encounter people during the most difficult of times. Please consider increasing funding to rural agencies to ensure we have the ability to carry out our mission.

Should you wish to discuss any of this further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michael Perkins