

July 17, 2020

To: Chair Aron Michlewitz, Chair Claire Cronin

Re: S2820 Written Testimony

At the end of everyday as a caring person you should look in the mirror and ask yourself if you did the right thing and accomplished a goal through your day. You, as State Representatives, of this fine Commonwealth need to accomplish that as S2820 is now before you. You need to ask yourself if this proposed legislation will “reform police standards and shift resources to build a more equitable, fair and just Commonwealth that values Black Lives and communities of color”.

S2820 has a fancy headline but after reading it, anyone with common sense will realize S2820 is full of smoke in mirrors that will do absolutely nothing but grab headlines, put kids at risk, and penalize public employees. It will place extra cost on all 351 Cities and Towns and limit the ability for them to find excellent, young candidates to become police officers, school teachers and firefighters.

Let’s face it, if you really want to help people you need to help them long before they have a negative police interaction. This bill does not include any funding to target education, health care, and housing needs. This bill does not do anything to help or further fund social service agencies that already rely on the police for help every single day! Furthermore, this bill has ZERO funding for anything.

Deerfield is a small community we only have two police officers working at a time and we have done our very best to recruit educated, progressive, and diverse police officers to serve our community. Our town chose to fully fund the Quinn Bill after you defunded it, because we know that we want educated caring and progressive police officers and higher education is one of the best ways to accomplish that goal. Now you’re going to put an even higher cost on our community if this bill passes with additional unfunded mandates that will do nothing to accomplish the headline of the bill.

You need to face the fact, there is no emergency and no need to rush any legislation as result of a murder in another state. Massachusetts leads the nation in progressive community-based policing, diversity and de-escalation training, and it is successful.

By stripping Qualified Immunity, you will hurt all public employees. If this bill goes through teachers will be getting sued for giving bad grades, and firefighters will be getting sued because a house burnt down. Look in the mirror, you don’t want to be sued for passing bad laws and your Qualified Immunity isn’t affected by this bill.

Does it make sense to set up a group of doctors to determine if a teacher should remain licensed? Take a good look at the Police Officer Standards and Accreditation Committee part of the bill and ask yourself that same question.

Massachusetts Police Departments lead the nation in cohesion with school systems to have guided school resource officer programs to protect kids from violent shootings, but also to be there as ear for kids and parents. We cannot let a few people change the law to remove school resource officers, have you forgotten about school shootings? Have you added up the number of people shot in schools to the number of unjustified police involved shootings?

If you want to live up to the headline of this bill put S2820 in the trash. Pass legislation to help where it is actually needed: education, housing, social services and healthcare.

If you want to continue to improve policing lets work together, to bring back full funding of the Quinn Bill. Create a retirement bill to make Massachusetts competitive with other states. Give local officers the same benefits of the 25/75 retirement plan of State Troopers. Communities need to be able to recruit and retain the next generation of police officers that will make excellent choices, talk to people, and keep use of force to an all-time low. S2820 and the actions of many law makers is disheartening, parents are telling kids to stay away from public service and if S2820 passes it is just going to make it even worse.

Respectfully Submitted,

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