

Dear Chair of the House Committee on Ways and Means, Rep Aaron Michelwitz and
Chair Claire Cronin ,

As a concerned citizen and a proud family member of law enforcement, I write to you today to please consider some of the negative ramifications of passing the current senate bill S.2800 as it is now. Everyone, including all of law enforcement was absolutely horrified at the terrible mistreatment and subsequent death of George Floyd. That tragic case was an aberration and far from the norm in the professional and brave police work performed across the country day to day, especially here in the Bay State. The overwhelming majority of law enforcement in this country would give their lives to protect George Floyd or any other person that is in harms way. As eloquently stated by Senator Fattmann referencing law enforcement here in Massachusetts “the egregious sins of other law enforcement in other parts of the country should not be their burden to bear.”

While this bill has some great components, there are unfortunately some parts that although they may be well intentioned will have serious negative ramifications not only for the profession of law enforcement but for the community as well. Before making any decisions I implore you on attempting to better understand for a moment the critical need our society has for law and order as we are seeing crime rates and violence rise across the country.

To do this I am respectfully asking that before you make any decisions on how Officers perform their duties that you personally do the following things listed below. These are recommendations taken from the Executive Board Members of the National Police Wives Association.

- **Go on ride-alongs during several shifts, in several areas of our city. This should definitely include high crime areas over the weekend, or any other times the Police Department may experience a high volume in calls.**
- **Go through a Police Simulator with use of force scenarios and document your results for study. As you begin to legislate or form your opinion on Officer response, these notes will be helpful and useful for you to understand what might go through an Officer’s mind when they only have milliseconds to act.**
- **Lastly- and most important – arrange to sit down and talk with widows and family members of Fallen Officers. Talk with Wounded and Injured Officers, both permanently disabled and those who were able to return to work. Sit down with the spouses and families of those in law enforcement who saw too much and committed suicide. Finally speak with officers who have had their careers cut short due to issues with PTSD and other issues that sprung from trauma experienced because of the weight of the job. We would be happy to facilitate meetings with any of the families who are dealing with these challenges.**

I sincerely believe that some of these actions though well intentioned will actually lead to an increase in violence as we are already seeing the effects of this occur in many major cities across the country. It is becoming evident that the direct result of knee jerk reactions from people rushing to make change without ensuring that the changes and the potential negative side effects are carefully examined first. It is very evident the recent large cuts to NYPD's budget and the disbanding of the plain clothes unit has led to a tragic major spike in violence, shootings and crimes. It is critical that Massachusetts law makers delicately balance making changes to law enforcement with being certain to ensure they can effectively do their jobs to keep citizens safe.

With this in mind I ask you to carefully consider the negative effects of the following;

- **Police Equipment:** While removing less lethal options from law enforcement such as pepper spray, tasers and police dogs may sound to some like a great idea in reality it will remove safer options from police when they are confronted with a dangerous and violent subject. Pepper spray (also called OC) is a non-lethal option that is far safer than using batons or fists when trying to subdue a dangerous subject. Just recently we were reminded of the instrumental support role that police k-9's play when they assisted in the capture of a man involved in shooting a innocent 15 year old girl at the Braintree Plaza. Tasers are a far greater and less lethal alternative than an officer having to use their firearm to subdue and protect themselves from a violent subject.
- **Qualified Immunity:** Removal of qualified immunity will be devastating for the profession. This protection allows for police to act professionally and confidently within the confines of the law without the fear of constant personal lawsuits. Taking away this protection will result in police fearing doing their job and responding to all calls including medicals. They can not properly do their job if a police officer has to fear that doing CPR on a person in distress could lead to a personal lawsuit if a rib accidentally breaks in the process of trying to save a life. The fear of frivolous lawsuits will discourage community policing which is greatly needed right now in order to build bridges and help the healing process.
- **Due Process:** The certification process and the removal of certification must include due process for law enforcement. If officers can be removed without fair and just hearing it will not have good results for the profession or the commonwealth. If legislators take away due process and fair hearings when an officer is accused of misconduct it could set a dangerous precedent for unfair targeting of police officers. Law enforcement risk their lives for us daily and deserve due process.
- **Sharing Information:** The amendment to not allow schools to share known gang or crime affiliations of students with law enforcement will have devastating consequences for the safety of schools. It is unfair to the many students not involved in gang activity who deserve to go to school without fear of being targeted or recruited by gang members. Students deserve a safe learning

environment. Just this week Boston Police Departments, Youth Violence Task Force took a fully loaded gun off a 14 year old. This information is vital to the police in helping keep illegal weapons off the streets and out of schools. Many Boston Public school teachers have personally shared with me their serious concerns over this policy making schools less safe.

In closing I believe everyone agrees reforms can be made to help improve police work through more trainings and more requirements. Measures like this can help restore faith and healing with the communities officers serve in. However Legislators must be sure that the changes made do not destroy and demonize a noble profession. My greatest fear is that qualified people will shy away from joining law enforcement in the future. Currently many major cities across the country are facing shortages of qualified candidates including Baltimore and Detroit. In recent years the number of people attempting to start the process to become officers in our great state has already begun diminishing. If legislators continue to make the job increasingly dangerous and difficult to do we could face a serious shortage of people willing to become law enforcement officers in the near future.

Several of the officers I know personally left far safer and more lucrative careers because they had a calling to protect and serve. I know officers with law degrees and business degrees and they are incredible assets to their departments. Many years ago my husband left his well paying and secure job as an accountant with a very successful company because he had a calling to work in law enforcement to serve the city he grew up in and loves dearly. Many of the things in this bill could prevent well educated and highly qualified people who would be an asset to any department from taking that risk to join. Please consider the future of the profession when making these decisions. As I recently heard one lawmaker say when referring to police reforms “Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater!”

I greatly appreciate your time and hope you thoughtfully take time to meet with law enforcement have a greater understanding of the profession and what they deal with day to day by going on ride-alongs, doing use of force simulations and meeting with families of officers suffering from injury or from LODD. Please consider the some of the negative ramifications from what may be well intentioned reforms but will in the end greatly hurt the commonwealth and the profession of law enforcement. I am more than happy to help set up or facilitate any meetings with law enforcement and their families.

Sincerely,
Siobhan Pacino
Concerned Resident of Massachusetts
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