

Chairman Michlewitz & Chairwoman Cronin,

I have been a Middleboro Police Officer for 20 years, I currently hold the rank of Sergeant in the Patrol Division. I also am a recently retired, disabled Army Special Forces Soldier (Green Beret) who served my country for 23 years with multiple deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq. Far away from familiar faces and tongues, I have fought with those of different nations, religions, races, tribes, and sexes. Without hyperbole, some of them have literally saved my life, and I theirs. The life I have tried to live, has been one of service, honor and sacrifice. My faith is important to me as well, I am a Christian who believes all of us are God's children.

I would like to provide written testimony for HB S2820. I have never written a politician nor attempted to provide testimony prior to this in my life. While writing this today, I am skeptical it will even make a difference or anyone will even read it. The intent of this letter is not provide you with "talking points" from local police organizations and unions, but rather, who I am, how I feel about this legislation, and how it has affected me both personally and professionally.

When I watched the video of George Floyd being murdered I was horrified, when he called out for his mother it brought tears to my eyes. What that officer did was wrong, and should be condemned by all. It looked to me as if that officer even enjoyed it, digging his knee in deeper and harder. I pray for George Floyd's soul and for his family. It was horrific to watch, yet I have not heard one, not one police officer, even try and justify or defend what happened.

The fact is there are bad, rogue police officers who are bullies with badges out there. Police officers everywhere have to admit that and do everything we can to eliminate them. Honestly, though can you give me one profession that doesn't have bad actors, rogue, untruthful individuals who give their colleagues a bad name? Bad doctors, lawyers, construction workers, firefighters, teachers, bankers, are out there. Yet the ills of society are not laid at their feet. While we are being honest, this bill has nothing to do with police reform. If it was, why isn't the largest Police department in the Commonwealth included, one with a very public problem of misconduct? I haven't seen one statistic that points to an epidemic of police misconduct, excessive or deadly force, especially here in Massachusetts. In fact, its my experience, however antidotal, police officers underutilize force, often to their own detriment. Similarly, where are the statistics showing Police Officers are racist? How do you think that accusation makes minority officers feel, who they themselves may have been victim to some type of discrimination? Yet that title has been laid at our feet as well, the irony of pre-judgment against an entire group of people is rich.

This is about a far, radical left narrative of those that want to socially re-engineer our society. The consequences of this bill will be far reaching. There will be secondary and third order effects not thoroughly thought of not from a bill that was passed in the dark of night. Police Agencies were having a difficult time finding qualified candidates

prior to this Bill. Does anyone believe this is going to help, who wants to be a cop anymore? I can tell you one thing, pro-active policing is dead, crime will sore. My wife and I are discussing a very early retirement, one that will leave me with less than 50 percent of my pay. I am looking into going back to a trade school, possibly starting a landscaping business as well. I'd rather cut grass than have the leaders in government call me and my colleagues racist, prejudice, abusive, responsible for all the problems in our communities. I have seen District Attorneys, Mayors, State reps, State Senators, Congressmen & women and Senators all say this. I have to ask myself do they really believe it, is this real? My children are scared, I had to tell them not to mention to anyone their daddy is a police officer anymore. My wife is terrified everyday that we will be sued and lose everything we have worked so hard for. As a leader in my department I struggle with holding my tongue, and not telling the newer guys to just leave. I try and set an example of steady leadership, that this too will pass and we will overcome it. The truth is, we won't, this will change policing forever. There was a time when I wanted to perhaps be a Chief one day, now I can't leave this job fast enough.

There are bad apples out there but what if this whole damn barrel we work in every day is rotten too. My peers and I work in the toxic realm of humanity every day and see people at their worst. According to one study by the NIJ police officers nationwide average 3 traumatic events every 6 months. The science of trauma tells us just one traumatic event can send someone into a lifetime of depression, substance abuse and struggle. Yet it's part of the job, we can handle it and just go to the next call. I cynically laugh when I hear people say police officers are resilient. They aren't, what we have are spectacular distractions and a super human ability to compartmentalize, but we are not more resilient than anyone else. Our bodies still have to process that trauma, somehow, someday. Who takes care of us? Why aren't we talking about real police reform, getting us access to confidential, vetted, clinicians, to access cutting edge treatments like EMDR, training on meditation, and yoga, fitness, and other wellness practices?

We are your little league coaches, softball coaches, PTA members, and community volunteers who work long hours, wearing a gun belt and ballistic vest to work every day, we are the men and women who answer your calls, day or night hot or cold wet or dry, when no one else will. Why do you feel the need to strip qualified immunity us, tear down the tenants of due process while destroying civil service? Why should we be subject to a review board made up of members who will judge our split second decisions made under dynamic, tense circumstances with 20/20 hindsight who have never had to make those decisions.

This personally takes offense to not only this Bill but the manner in which it is being brought about. I will not apologize for evil deeds I did not do nor will I be blamed for the evils of discrimination and racism. We are honorable men and women doing a difficult, once honorable job. I all who read this to vote this bill down, or at the very least slow it down and proceed under the normal legislative process.

Respectfully Submitted,
Angelo J Lapanna III

