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HIGH PRIORITY

By E-Mail: Testimony.HWMJudiciary@mahouse.gov

Representative Aaron Michlewitz
Representative Claire Cronin
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Bill S.2820

Dear Representatives Michlewitz and Cronin:

I am writing to letter to you today to urge you vote against Bill S.2820. This bill may have been stemmed from good intentions but comes with unintended consequences. Although police reform is a certainly a discussion to be had, the hastily manner in which this bill was thrown together will benefit no one. This bill will certainly create one change, unsafe communities.

Police are our line of defense against the evil that exists in our society. They are the ones who literally put their lives on the line for us, every single shift they work. When a police officer kisses their loved ones goodbye on their way out the door, they don't know if this will be the last time they will see each other.

This bill only makes it harder for our first responders to perform their job, and perform effectively. This bill will lead to early retirements, resignations, low recruitment and ineffective policing. It almost appears as this is the end goal, to ultimately end the role of police in Massachusetts. Just two months ago our police officers were celebrated as they continued going out to work, protecting our communities, exposing themselves to Covid-19 while the majority of us stayed in our homes. We called upon them to participate in birthday parades to help put a smile on our children's faces when their typical birthday celebrations were forced to be canceled.

Is the Massachusetts legislature going to condemn an entire professional community because of the actions of a rogue cop in Minnesota? Actions we all united behind as horrific?

The fact this bill was pushed through the Senate without a public hearing and voted upon at 4:00am speaks volumes. Those who created this piece of legislation and those who irrationally voted to support it know there are major issues with it or else it wouldn't have followed the unconventional process that it did.

Although there are numerous flaws in this bill, the following are the most egregious:

- Requiring public hearings for the purchase of military-grade equipment
- Prohibits schools from cooperating with law enforcement agencies, including alleged or confirmed gang affiliation
- Removes the requirement of a school resource officer
- Requires law enforcement training to include the history of slavery, lynching, racist legal institutions and racism in the United States. Why not apply this training to all public employees including state representatives and senators?
- Authorizes the Attorney General to bring civil lawsuits against officers
- Allows a person to bring civil lawsuits against officers
- Creates a licensing board with no law enforcement representation

Violence against our police officers is increasing every day. Our police officers are being murdered at increasing rates, yet the murders of unarmed individuals has been decreasing for years. Why would any legislator support such a poorly constructed bill, one that opens up our heroes to frivolous lawsuits which not only impact them, but their innocent families as well. How do you not see these heroes will be afraid to have any interaction with the public for fear of such lawsuits? They're families could lose their careers, their retirement, their homes, their livelihoods. If you were forced to perform this type of work under these proposed conditions, would you actively fight crime to keep our communities safe, or would you choose to limit any interaction you may have in order to keep your family safe? Vote against this bill so proper, responsible and thoughtful reform can take place.

Sincerely,

Kelly Gallagher

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