



MASSACHUSETTS LATINO POLICE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 117 South Easton, Massachusetts 02375

website: www.masslatinopolice.org

July 16, 2020

Respectable Chair of The House Ways and Means Committee and the House Chair of the Judiciary Committee.

On behalf of the members of The Massachusetts Latino Police Officers Association, Inc. (MLPO). We ask your committee to consider all members of law enforcement and minority groups before passing Bill S2820. The approved bill by The Senate, will be making an irreversible change that would bear dire consequences to police officers and their respective communities.

We agree that creating a POST commission (Police Officer Standards and Training) is a necessary change and long overdue. We in fact welcome a certification and training mandate for all police officers across The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. However, the way bill S2820 that was voted on and the provisions it has attached to it threatens all the members of the public sector, as it aims to sweep away from public employees the fair and equitable due process and qualified immunity that ensures that no reasonable officers while in the performance of their duties is held liable for what may be perceived as racial or excessive force behavior.

If changes are to be made to qualified immunity, such change needs to be methodical and transparent. This cannot be done overnight, without proper protocols being followed. The fundamentals of due process and fair representation are being taken away from our profession. The bill S2820 passed by The Senate is unacceptable, it undermines our profession, public safety, and denies us the right to be heard and not having a say is clearly undemocratic.

This extremely dangerous legislation, S2820, that was passed by The Senate does away with basic protections that are currently set in civil service law. The Senate failed to include law enforcement and/or minority groups in any discussion, the Commission they have created is driven by anti-police groups, with a one-sided view of resentment towards police that is filled with biases and deemed incapable of being fair and impartial towards our profession. The Senate's bill has put good officers in jeopardy of civil lawsuits while in performance of their duties to protect their respective communities.

The Members of the Massachusetts Latino Police Officers Association, Inc, welcomes a uniform police training system across The Commonwealth, as such standards have been a long-awaited change. However, we are against rushing a knee-jerk reaction legislation that fails to look at all the risks that these hastily made changes will cost law enforcement and public employees in general. The cost of Senate bill S2820 is to astronomical to bear as it has been

presented. Therefore, we ask that you stop and do not pass this legislation in order to more carefully evaluate it before it becomes enacted into law.

The consensus is that reform is needed, the profession is not perfect and there is always room for improvement in policing. The proposed bill S2820 has too many concerns and requires your immediate attention. Those issues are enumerated below:

- Due Process should be maintained and all Police officers and public employees are deserving of a right to appeal and impartial adjudications.
- Qualified Immunity is only extended to those police officers and public employees who act “reasonably” and in compliance with rules and regulations. It protects the employee and the municipalities from lawsuits.
- The POST Commission needs to be equally represented by police officers.
- Bi-annual training for Use of Force, Firearms, Defensive Tactics, De-escalating Techniques, Crisis-Prevention/Intervention, aggressive behavior recognition/management, cultural diversity training, communication and second language classes need to be provided.
- Support for the MPTC’s work on the standardization of training for all academies that are in place now (full-time, reserve intermittent and SSPO that currently exist should be grandfathered in)
- One standardized academy going forward for all officers of The Commonwealth regardless of the department.
- Officers to have free tuition or discounted classes for those who want to pursue further training/education in social justice, sociology, psychology, race and community relations and other courses/programs deemed necessary in the performance of our duties.
- Bring back mandatory in person-training vs all-online training.

In closing, I want to thank you for your time and consideration on this extremely important matter. The MLPO is here and ready to be part of the reform conversation. I ask The House of Representatives to effectively delay and vote no on S2820 legislation until more discussion can occur and a more sensible bill can be drawn up. Help protect the law enforcement officers and public employees from the harm of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Yessenia Gomez, President
Massachusetts Latino Police Officers Association, Inc.
yessenia@masslatinopolice.org
617-281-5953