



NATALIE HIGGINS  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
4<sup>TH</sup> WORCESTER DISTRICT

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

Vice Chair  
Committee on Personnel and Administration

Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

Joint Committee on Mental Health,  
Substance Use, and Recovery

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 527A  
TEL: (617) 722-2020  
Natalie.Higgins@MAhouse.gov

July 17, 2020

Chair Claire D. Cronin  
House Committee on the Judiciary  
MA State House, Room 136  
Boston, MA 02133

Chair Aaron Michlewitz  
House Committee on Ways and Means  
MA State House, Room 243  
Boston, MA 02133

**Written Testimony re: S2820, An Act to reform police standards and shift resources to build a more equitable, fair and just commonwealth that values Black lives and communities of color**

Chairs Cronin & Michlewitz,

Thank you for opening up a public comment period on this important legislation. I look forward to debating and passing bold legislation that will result in systemic change. First and foremost, I urge you to include language addressing the four state-level priorities of the Massachusetts Elected Officials of Color:

- (1) Implement a statewide Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) system that certifies police officers and enables de-certification for misconduct and abuse (inspired by H2146 - Reps. Holmes & Vieira);
- (2) Establish an Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity to establish guidelines and review for diversity plans for all state agencies and establish a peace officer exam advisory board to review examinations for appointment and promotion of peace officers (H2292 - Rep. Holmes);
- (3) Establish a commission to study how the systemic presence of institutional racism has created a culture of structural racial inequality which has exacerbated disproportionate minority contact with the criminal justice system in Massachusetts (H1440 - Rep. Holmes); and
- (4) Adopt clear statutory limits on police use of force, including choke-holds and other tactics known to have deadly consequences, require independent investigation of officer-related deaths, and require data collection and reporting on race, regarding all arrests and police use of force by every department (HD5128 - Liz Miranda)

Further, in order to ensure the above policies create their intended systemic change, we must reform qualified immunity to ensure that people have recourse when their constitutional rights are violated by police. We know of many egregious cases right here in the Commonwealth, where Massachusetts residents have been denied an opportunity to seek justice. It is our duty to pass legislation to ensure their voices are heard. I look forward to working with you and your staff on passing this legislation in the House next week.

Sincerely,

Natalie Higgins