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Testimony for House review of S.2820

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As a police officer, this bill is weighing heavily on my mind. Please read this with an open mind and an open heart.

It is evident that the goal of this bill is to improve the lives of all in the Commonwealth, particularly communities of color and black lives, all of which is reasonable, proper, and overdue. The means to the end are not reasonable and will not accomplish the stated goals. Some particulars of this bill, as well as the haste in which it is being pushed through, raise concerns for law enforcement and for the population as a whole. If this bill passes as it stands, there will unquestionably be unintended consequences; do not let these be overlooked.

I am a former Corrections Officer who served for almost four years during which time I worked as a Field Training Officer and on the Sheriff's Response Team. I have recently joined the Norwood Police Department as a Patrolman, a move that has taken many years of hard work to achieve. I am also a former EMT. Although I am not a decades-seasoned veteran, the following is not offered to you without thoughtful law enforcement experience. It also comes with the best in mind for the Commonwealth as a whole, not only for law enforcement officers and departments.

Separately, having professional standards and licensing (like many other professions) is not unreasonable and is, without opposition, likely inevitable. What is of concern is putting people without law enforcement experience in a position to make determinations of what is right and what is wrong for an officer to do without understanding the positions law enforcement officers are put in every day. Plumbers don't judge medical professionals: supervision ought to come from those who have worked and understand the job roles. That is exactly how supervisors and management works, that's how an overseeing committee ought to operate.

Having time to think, debate, and reason are not luxuries we always have. We make split second decisions for the best and safest outcome based on our training, experience, and pure good will; the same good will that we have when we strive to get the job in the first place.

As a former corrections officer, I can say many police officers do not even understand what life and operation of a correctional facility entails. And I don't mean from a security/procedure standpoint. I'm talking about the things that happen behind the walls, the things that most of society does not see, the things that normal, ordinary citizens don't have to even imagine, less deal with every day. Life behind the walls is different (to put it lightly). The criminals and detainees who correctional professionals have to endure day in and day out is under-appreciated and under-valued. Think about this: 1 or 2 officers working in a unit with up to 120 criminals or detainees. Try to imagine yourself in that position. The constant pending physical threat, the psychological manipulation officers endure are hidden from the outside world. Yet, someone on a committee without any experience is going to make judgements of how an officer's job is done?

Now take those same people. On the street, in the real world, with real weapons, real substance abuse issues, and real mental health issues. Many of whom do not have the help they need, yet we try to help many of them every day. Outside a secure correctional facility, without metal detectors, without searches conducted by policy for every individual entering. There is no security on the street. We, law