



## Testimony in Support of SB 122

Dear Members of the Committee on Public Safety and Security:

My name is Aparajita Kaphle and I am an undergraduate student at Yale University. I write in support of SB-122: **AN ACT ESTABLISHING A UNIT WITHIN THE DIVISION OF STATE POLICE TO INVESTIGATE HATE CRIMES AND CRIMINAL ACTS COMMITTED BY EXTREMIST GROUPS.**

Hate crimes are on the rise in Connecticut, as they are across the nation. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the divisions that already exist between racial, ethnic, religious, and gender groups. Some of these divisions have worsened to the extent that they prompt violent action by an individual or group of individuals towards neighbors of minority status. One of the most significant duties of a government, whether it be federal, state, or local, is to assure the protection of its governed citizens. S.B. 122, through “establish[ing] a unit within the State Police to investigate hate crimes and criminal acts committed by extremist groups,” will hold Connecticut accountable to this responsibility.

In a recent editorial piece, Sen. Martin M. Looney makes a convincing case for the bill in writing “It is evident that a task force to investigate these trends should be established...our state police have already created task forces to pursue crimes including narcotics sales, home invasions, motor vehicle fraud, urban violence, automotive theft, and illegal firearms...a task force to investigate hate crimes and violence based on ideology is a necessity to preserve the safety and peace of mind of the people of Connecticut.”

According to the Connecticut 2017 Bias Crime Report, in 66 of the 110 hate crime incidents reported, there is no information about the offender. How can we expect to prosecute a person we have no information about? This issue will be eliminated for the most part with the formation of a police unit dedicated to cracking down on hate crime incidents. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the activity among extremist groups in Connecticut. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) reports that in 2015, there were only two groups motivated by bias and bigotry operating within the state of Connecticut. However, in 2020, the SPLC listed *six* different hate groups that were tracked by law enforcement in Connecticut. The need for legislative action has never been greater.

I would like to see the state of Connecticut to take greater action in addressing hate crimes. As a person of color myself, I would feel much safer knowing that hate-driven actions are met with adequate response. In passing this bill, Connecticut would be taking a tangible stand in the betterment of POC communities. It is imperative that accountability and transparency are at the forefront of addressing hate crimes. This bill is one of the most productive ways Connecticut can take a strong standing for POC as well as the general safety of our community. Now more than ever as we see a rise in hate groups, drives the necessity of the passage of this bill.

I hope that the evidence presented in this testimony is sufficient enough to prove that **SB-122: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A UNIT WITHIN THE DIVISION OF STATE POLICE TO INVESTIGATE HATE CRIMES AND CRIMINAL ACTS COMMITTED BY EXTREMIST GROUPS** will be an extremely beneficial policy to pass for all citizens of Connecticut, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With gratitude,

Aparajita Kaphle