



Iliana Pujols

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Good morning members of the Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force,

My name is Iliana Pujols and I am the Director of Community Connections for the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. CTJJA is committed to ending the criminalization of youth by disrupting and dismantling the systems that funnel our young people into the justice systems. I am also a Connecticut native who has lived in New Haven, Waterbury and Bridgeport – 3 cities known for having difficult relationships between police and communities.

I am testifying today to ask members of the Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force to submit recommendations to the Connecticut Legislature and to Governor Lamont that increase accountability for our state's police forces and that work to address the racial and ethnic disparities that we see at every stage of our justice system.

Increasing Accountability

To start, I would like to discuss increasing accountability. Through my work with CTJJA, I have talked to countless incarcerated young people. In our conversations many expressed a lack of trust in a system that displays abuses of authority. If officers want to develop relationships with communities we must start by increasing trust, by ensuring that police are held to the same standard as any other community member.

This is why I am in full support of ending qualified immunity. During the discussions surrounding the Police Accountability Bill (LCO No. 3471, An Act Concerning Police Accountability), ending qualified immunity was controversial - to me it is common sense. Ending qualified immunity is the first and most significant step that needs to be taken to ensure everyone is held to the same standard of accountability whether they are an officer or citizen.

Secondly, we cannot expect police departments to police themselves. We must incorporate outside accountability to make sure that investigations into accusations of misconduct and excessive force, investigations into firearm discharges, and other instances of wrongdoing, are thoroughly, objectively, and fairly investigated. Civilian Review Boards, Independent Monitors/Auditors, Independent Investigators, and Special Prosecutors are four examples of alternatives to the model that currently exists.

Addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities

We also have to implement policies that specifically seek to address the racial and ethnic disparities we see at every stage of our justice system - this starts with bias in policing.

We all have internalized biases, and police departments don't often reflect the communities they serve. This means we must build out practices and policies that combat individual and systemic biases to prevent a disproportionate number of Black and brown youth from entering the justice system.

I want to thank the members of the Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force for hearing my testimony today. If you take one thing from what I've said, please let it be this: I understand the good experiences some have had - the reality of my life and those close to me is our experiences aren't equally as great. If we want a fair and equitable system and if we want to increase trust between officers and community members, the Police Accountability Bill must only be the start. Stay safe and well.