



Jordyn Wilson

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Good morning members of the Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force. My name is Jordyn Wilson and I am the Community Connections Associate for the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA). 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 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 reduces police presence on unnecessary calls and promotes more funding for the investment in the state's youth.

#### Police Presence on Unnecessary Calls

We know currently the police are the people who respond when wellness checks are needed within our communities. But how well can I be when someone with a loaded weapon on their hip, who is authorized to use lethal force and kill me if they perceive me as a threat, is knocking on my door asking me questions? While I understand good intent is there, what can that officer do for me in the event I am not ok? He can call an ambulance, and emergency medical services for me if that is what I need, but can he get me access to a psychologist in the event of a mental health crisis? or a domestic violence counselor in the event my spouse just beat on me and left for work? Can he get my kids access to a social worker while distance learning? Can he assess my needs and provide me the services I need on impact? No? Then why is he responding to that call?

Police should not be responding to calls they are not trained for. We should instead move to integrate and ensure collaboration with social services so that people receive the adequate care they need, instead of an unwelcoming and terrifying experience that may go the wrong way.

#### Investment in Connecticut's Youth

In the past year, I have had the opportunity to talk to young people in various settings, including juvenile justice staff secure facilities, and those conversations always lead to the question of, "What could have been in place for you so you didn't end up here or end up justice system involved?"

A lot of the youth in the communities the police serve would rather have Connecticut invest in a basketball court or provide their schools with resources that their wealthier peers have. They'd like mentors, and real opportunities to make legal money, not invest money into SWAT gear and the other items.. They never once said, "more police."

In June 2020, we launched our Invest In Me CT campaign which asked the state to make intentional investments into youth, families and communities. These asks were developed after listening to and being in partnership with young people in the most impacted communities.

CTJJA is calling on the state of Connecticut to:

- Invest in a wide variety of activities, programs, and resources
- Invest in mental health and other support services to prioritize healing community-level trauma faced by youth and families.
- Develop and implement a plan to establish trust and heal relationships between state agencies and communities where there has historically been distrust and fear.
- Create strategic plans to address and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in our justice systems.

This task force can help CTJJA push our calls to action by ensuring Connecticut's police departments withdraw from responding to calls where they are not a good fit, therefore leaving dollars on the table for the most appropriate organizations to implement all of the points mentioned above.

Reinvesting money currently used to fund police departments could be better spent funding social workers, mental health counselors, and restorative justice providers.

I know through my time working with CTJJA that it is always best to ask the community what they need and how to best implement that; this is what the legislature of Connecticut must do in order to enact and implement real, meaningful change that is sustainable.

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: Connecticut's youth are struggling, and the amount of money put in place for our police departments can be utilized better with full investment into our children - especially Black and brown children in low-income communities that have, for decades, seen little to no investment.