

Hello everyone. My name is Troy Davis and I'm a 10 year resident of Norwalk.

First, I'd like to thank the Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force for the work you're doing to improve policing in Connecticut and allowing us to share our ideas in this session.

I'd also like to say my family and I strongly support our friends and neighbors who serve with the Norwalk Police Department. We recognize and appreciate their bravery, the risks they take, and the sacrifices they make to protect our safety, property and lives.

We also support the Black Lives Matter movement. I've heard some people say "Yes, but all lives matter".

Of course this is true, but misses the point that Black Lives are being lost at an alarming rate due to systemic racism and institutionalized bias. The truth is, all lives cannot matter until Black Lives Matter.

I'd like to use my time to share our views on some relevant topics and present some ideas to help inform the recommendations you will be making...

- We do not support efforts to de-fund the police and believe this is a really bad idea. I don't know where this idea came from, I don't know anyone who supports it, and I haven't heard an explanation of how civil society could function with out appropriate police oversight.

- We do support constitutional rights of free speech and peaceful assembly to protest abuses of power. We celebrate dissent as a core American principle and consider it our patriotic duty to stand up and speak out whenever we experience or witness injustice.

- We do not support protesters who cause harm to others, or cause damage to personal or public property. Protest is not an excuse to engage in illegal behavior. Outrage does not justify crime.

- We do support and recognize the necessity for police action to prevent rioting, and understand that to accomplish this goal police may need to use force to prevent greater harm and are justified in doing so.

- We do not support police officers who use unnecessary or excessive force. We acknowledge police officers are often required to make nearly instant decision in very dangerous situations, and recognize the need for adequate training to make sure they are prepared to make the best choices.

- We do support the work of this task force to create greater transparency and accountability within our state and local police forces, and believe this will benefit both the community and police officers.

- We do not support police officers who attempt to intimidate residents or elected officials.

- We do support efforts to investigate the July 24 incident when it was reported Senator Bob Duff was harassed by police officers while meeting with union leaders at police headquarters in Norwalk, to identify and reprimand the individual officers who engaged in this behavior, and for Mayor Harry Rilling, Police Chief Thomas Kulhawik (who it's great to see on the call today) and Norwalk Police Union President David O'Connor to issue a joint statement condemning police intimidation as inappropriate and unacceptable, and promising the residents of Norwalk that this type of behavior will not be tolerated.

It should be obvious from this incident that we have a serious problem in Norwalk. While most police officers service with dignity and honor, there are some who think it's okay to disrespect and intimidate our elected officials. This is outrageous and utterly unacceptable. I don't understand how anyone could conclude threats of physical harm would be an effective negotiating tool in this situation. I'm also not sure how anyone could miss the fact that this behavior undermines any and all claims that the Norwalk Police Union supports transparency and accountability. Don't they understand? Senator Duff is all of us. All of us are Senator Duff. When they disrespect him they disrespect all of us.

If the Norwalk Police Union disagrees with any of the provisions of the recently passed accountability law, their voice need to be heard so they don't feel the need to act inappropriately.

Troy Davis  
917-488-9432