



Destinee Hendricks - 12 Years Old

Waterbury, CT

Dear Members of the Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force,

My name is Destinee Hendricks and I am 12 years old. I attend Waterbury Arts Magnet school (WAMS), and I am in the 7th grade. I feel that police should be held accountable for their actions. They take an oath to protect their community and have rules to follow. When they do not follow these rules, they should be held accountable. I support the Connecticut Police Accountability Bill.

As a young black girl, I worry for my black father and brothers when they go out in the community because of the color of their skin they can be shot for no reason by the police. They want us to live in fear. In my community, I have found that there is an uptick in police injustices to minorities black and brown. For example in Waterbury, the school-to-prison pipeline is a problem. Police Officers are being placed into the schools and arresting minority students at an alarming rate versus white students who commit the same offense. That is not fair, that is an injustice. Police officers placed in the Waterbury schools are arresting minority students at an alarming rate versus white students who commit the same offense.

If the criminal justice system wants us to follow the law then the police should too. The reason why I say police should follow the rules too is that having rules it gives the officers guidelines on how to approach a situation. By not following the rules they are showing us that they don't care what happens to us or our safety.

I am asking the members of the Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force to support the Police Accountability Law.

Nazhaya Minnis - 14 Years Old

Waterbury, CT

Good afternoon members of the Police Accountability Transparency Committee,

My name is Nazhaya Minnis, a resident of Waterbury, CT providing comments in support of the Police Accountability Bill, Bill Number 6004.

With this current Bill, I hope that we move our communities in the right direction so that we don't have to re-experience situations like George Floyd's or even Anthony Chulo Vega Cruz's again



here in our state. The Police Accountability Bill impacts my community because it determines how the police are taking full responsibility for their actions on duty. It holds a big impact on the lives of not only individuals but also families who have lost a loved one from excessive force. The bill on page 43, states, "He or she reasonably believes such to be necessary to defend himself or herself or a third person from what he or she reasonably believes to be the use or imminent use of deadly physical force". What I like about the bill is it provides things like prohibiting officers from asking for any additional documentation when being pulled over. It also requires and names probable cause as well as consent to search a person. I liked that included that officers must intervene when another officer uses excessive force to hold all police accountable.

Sadly these rules were not put in place with the cases of Mubarak Soleman, Anthony Chulo Vega Cruz, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and the countless others that have experienced or witnessed police brutality. The police brutality and systemic racism that happens in Minneapolis on May 25 was clear, even to me at the age of 14. Where former Officer Chauvin pressed his left knee with force in the area of Floyd's head and neck while George Floyd repeated "I CAN'T BREATHE". But as we know that didn't stop him from using his force on Mr. Floyd and he died the same day (May 25). When I found out about this it caused me to think about what the police are doing, and if it is to keep us safe from danger or if they are what we need to be saved from. This situation shows that it could have been any of us. It shows that no matter how many years went by we still are victims of racism. Even then the rule was broken that "officers must intervene when another officer uses excessive force" but not one officer stepped in and said this isn't right. After this life-changing event, we began the Black Lives Matter movement with peaceful protests with signs to represent and honor George Floyd. During many peaceful protests after that officers used tear gas and fired rubber bullets into the crowds.

This is not an isolated incident. These same experiences happen here in the state of Connecticut. My hope is that the bill helps place Connecticut in the right direction. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Alexa Smith – Age 15

New Haven, CT

Dear members of the Police Accountability Task Force,

My name is Alexa Smith and I am 15 years old and I reside in the city of New Haven. I am speaking in support of Bill No 6004 - "An Act Concerning Police Accountability".

I support this bill as young black women for numerous reasons . I have a black father , uncles , cousins , brothers , and now a nephew that could be the next victim of police brutality or violence simply because of the color of their skin . Before we would see more publicly police



brutality displayed on our black men but now after the case of Breonna Taylor became mainstream we now have knowledge that these actions affect women of color as well . Now I am not only concerned for the safety and well-being of the black men in my life but also the women . We normally hear about cases that take place outside of Connecticut and tend to forget that we do have incidents right in our state . In 2019 here in Fair Haven, CT during the holiday season an 8 year veteran officer was seen with a bodycam using excessive force on a man that was considered intoxicated . The actions described that took place were considered unnecessary force . This is just one example of many that have taken place in our own state .

I urge this committee to support the Police Accountability Bill to make mandatory and regularly scheduled diversity training specifically focused on unconscious bias . Unconscious biases are the reason why so many people of color are targeted as perceptions have already been formed. A study concluded after nearly 100 million traffic stops around the country on average , black drivers are 20% more likely to get pulled over in comparison to white drivers. I believe that the training is a first and necessary step to address police officers acknowledging their biases .

Kayla Murray – Age 23
Bridgeport, CT

Dear members of the Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force,

My name is Kayla Murray, and I am a member of the NAACP Greater Bridgeport Youth Council. I reside in the city of Bridgeport. I am speaking on Bill No 6004 – “An Act Concerning Police Accountability.” I will be speaking today in support of amending Bill No 6004.

When I was 19 years old I spent my Wednesday nights with my friends “chowing down” on wings and laughing at memes on Instagram. We’d stay out as respectfully late as possible and call our parents as we would head home. My mom would sit in the living room and graciously greet me upon my arrival. There would be some nights when I’d forget to call and she’d worry. She’d be in the living room waiting and would pull me tight and say, “There is so much happening in this world! I thank God every night that you make it home safely.” When things would happen to people my age I would always replay those words. I’d also be heartbroken because I could never imagine the pain that mothers feel when they lose their children! Last January I was devastated when I learned that 19-year-old Mubarak Soulemane was shot and killed by police!

Bill No 6004 is a great step in the right direction for holding those charged with protecting our communities accountable. For Mubarak to have been killed by the same group that boasts a motto such as “to protect and serve” is still hard to digest for most young people. Who was being protected? Who was served?



Section 7 of the Bill focuses on implementing an explicit guide for the basic and review training that officers must complete. “Tactical training for police officers regarding the use of physical force, training in the use of body-worn recording equipment,” and even implicit bias training are named in this section. The bill goes on to define what implicit bias training looks like, stating that it means “training on how to recognize and mitigate unconscious biases against a particular segment of the population...” What is not made clear in this definition are examples of the segments of our population that oftentimes are the subjects of such bias. Race is one segment that immediately comes to mind, as is sexual orientation. Yet, Mubarak was not just a black man. It was known by all departments involved on that fateful night that he was suffering from a schizophrenic episode. While this information was known, mental illnesses and psychopathic tendencies may not have been discussed as in depth as they should have been. This section of the bill needs to be more specific in calling out the lack of training many departments have in addressing and approaching those members of the public who, like Mubarak had been, are suffering. We can eliminate grey areas of uncertainty during de-escalation if the details of training are spelled out explicitly, show officers how to deal with the mentally unstable and disabled, and explicitly state what courses of actions can be taken to respectfully handle unique situations.

Another section of Bill No 6004, section 18, can be amended to eliminate tragic errors due to uncertainty. The section states that “each municipal police department shall complete an evaluation of the feasibility and potential impact of the use of social workers... on calls where the experience and training of a social worker could provide assistance.” The language here is too passive, adding that after each evaluation, individual departments can consider whether responses to certain calls would benefit from having a social worker present. The fact is, had a social worker been present to instruct State Trooper North and his partner on how to best approach a schizophrenic person, Mubarak would not have been fatally shot through a closed car window. This section should be rewritten to require all departments to engage a team of social workers to assist officers on calls where psychological distress may be evident. Evaluation and consideration will prompt little to no change.

In conclusion, I urge you to support amending Bill No 6004, with the understanding that these changes and those brought to you by my peers must be implemented. We are here representing our communities and fighting for the lives of our friends and families!

Cheyenne Powell - 12 Years Old
Waterbury, CT

Dear Members of the Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force,

Hi my name is Cheyenne Powell I am a new member of the NAACP Waterbury Youth Council. I will be speaking in support of the Police Accountability Bill.



I think the police should take accountability for what they do because some of them are putting people's lives at risk especially people of color. I have fear for the men in my life due to the things I see on the news that have happened all over the world to unarmed men of color. It's heartbreaking because I don't want to see one of my brothers on the news for that reason because they were killed by police officers.

I have noticed there are so many incidents that I have researched where police have caused more harm than help. This incident breaks my heart. It happened on April 2, 2020 a young man was fatally shot in front of his mother home in Manchester Ct. The police were coming to issue a warrant and it turned into a fatal shooting. Where his family insisted that the son had PTSD . He was unarmed !So what made this turn deadly ? I'm tired of hearing their investigations or the officers being suspended . What about being held Accountable like doing some jail time and not being able to ever be a police officer ever again . I also feel like they should be sued by the families they hurt . I think the task force should continue supporting the bill because it would keep millions safe.

Tamia Chapman, Age 13
Waterbury, CT

Good Afternoon or Evening Members of the Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force,

My name is Tamia Chapman and I am from Plainville, Connecticut. I am 13 years old and I am in 8th grade. I am a member of the NAACP Waterbury Youth Council. I am in favor of the Police Accountability bill.

The Police Accountability bill impacts me personally as a black girl with a black dad who has experienced being pulled over by the police just because of the color of his skin. I am fearful of my dad's life and for the lives of other black men and women in the community. This bill is a step in a direction to change a broken system for people of color who may have experienced injustices for many years just because of the color of their skin. This bill will help to educate the community on our rights and hold police accountable for their actions.

The recent incident at the US State Capitol in Washington, DC is a reminder of how far we have to go towards equality amongst all people in the United States. I feel that this bill will push us more towards equal injustice in the law and will help to hold police accountable for the long history of injustice against people of color. I urge this committee to continue to support the Police Accountability bill.



Ralph Toussaint, Age 17
New Haven, CT

Good Afternoon to the Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force.

My name is Ralph Toussaint, I am a 16 year old from New Haven and attend school in another town which is a predominantly white high school. When I walk out the house everyday I fear for myself and pray that I make it to my destination safely. I've recently noticed I've been stared down by a white officer and greeted with a wave or nod by an African American officer.

Even in school since freshman year I've felt like the Administration look at me more than my peers of another skin color. Even though I have a clean record a white person who's gotten in trouble wouldn't really be looked at unless they were making a commotion in the hallways. I'd often over hear a conversation about police brutality in school and my classmates would say things like "they shouldn't have resisted" or "they deserved it". It makes me feel so uncomfortable and it also hurts to say to myself "I hope I don't end up like the rest" for example Trayvon Martin or Breonna Taylor because not one of them deserved to be treated the way they were.

Every officer needs to be held accountable because it's disgusting and unacceptable that this has gone so far. I feel like some ways to hold the Police accountable is to make sure they follow the rules and they should come into the neighborhoods and see for themselves what type of people we are before they judge us by the color of our skin or the neighborhoods we live in. I also feel like they should have cultural training to understand those in our community. As a rising senior I also would also love to become a police officer and study Criminal Justice in college and I wouldn't want what's going on with the police to deter me. I urge this committee to continue to support the Police Accountability bill.

Tiara Walters, Age 15
New Haven, CT

Good Afternoon or Evening members of the Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force.

My name is Tiara Walters, I am a member of the Greater New Haven NAACP Youth Council. I reside in the city of New Haven. I am speaking on Bill No 6004 - "An Act Concerning Police Accountability." I will be speaking today on the support of section 19 of Bill No 6004.

Living within America is hard as a teenaged African American young woman. Continuously seeing my people, people of color having their lives taken because of them being wrongly



accused of something they didn't do and a police officer taking action when not needed. Here within New Haven, two Yale University police officers took it upon themselves to take action on a couple who they thought was driving a stolen car. Before this had taken place, the police were initially investigating a report of an armed robbery at a gas station. The car that the couple was in happened to look like the same car that was at the robbery at the gas station. Two Hamden police officers who were in the area of Yale University also decided to take action. When the cops got out of the vehicle they never turned on their body cameras which are talked about within the bill. Within the bill, it states that "Police patrol vehicle" means any state or local police vehicle other than an administrative vehicle in which an occupant is wearing body-worn camera equipment, a bicycle, a motor scooter, an all-terrain vehicle, an electric personal assistive mobility device, as defined in subsection (a) of section 14-289h, or an animal control vehicle." This section states that body cameras must be on which the police officers didn't do. This impacts my community heavily because it makes us feel like the police aren't doing their jobs. They are supposed to keep the community safe whereas now they are doing the opposite.

I am asking the members of the committee to support the use of police officers wearing body cameras and that they must be turned on as stated in the Police Accountability Bill. I believe supporting the use of body cameras will make sure the police are obeying the law. Thank you for allowing me the time to testify.

Valeria Yraita - Age 17

Norwich, CT

Dear Members of the Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force,

My name is Valeria Yraita , and I am a member of the NAACP Roberstine Duncan Youth Council. I reside in the City of Norwich. I am speaking on Bill No 6004 – "An Act Concerning Police Accountability." I will be speaking today in support of amending Section 29 of the bill.

Section 29 states, "A peace officer, special policeman appointed under section 29-18b 1291 or authorized official of the Department of Correction or the Board of Pardons and Paroles is justified in using a chokehold or other method of restraint applied to the neck area or that otherwise impedes the ability to breathe or restricts blood circulation to the brain of another person for the purposes specified in subsection (b) of this section only when he or she reasonably believes such use to be necessary to defend himself or herself from the use or imminent use of deadly physical force." Based on the language of the bill, the use of choke holds and restraints applied to the neck are still permitted and justified accordingly to the 'danger' the officers face between them and the aggressor. The continuation of permitting chokeholds will impose danger to the lives of the people encountering police officers. Due to the permission of utilizing different forms of chokeholds, there is a possibility a poorly trained officer



will not be able to distinguish at the moment whether they are enacting the carotid (KU-Roded) chokehold that temporarily stops blood flow to the brain and renders the person unconscious for some time but doesn't cut off breathing to a chokehold that impacts a person's windpipe and completely cuts of their ability to breath. This is not just a "what if", as it is known to have happened in the case of Eric Garner where New York Officer Daniel Pantaleo showed a poor attempt in conducting a chokehold. Officer Pantaleo bent his left arm around Garner's neck and used his right arm to tighten his grip which left Garner unable to breathe and led to his death due to this hold.

I support amending Bill No. 6004, Section 29 to remove the permission for officers to utilize "chokeholds" or "other methods of restraint to the neck", as it is left to an officer's open interpretation on the type of restraint they can utilize when feeling there is a danger when facing an aggressor. The section must refer back to an officer's self defense training, especially in specifying the type of restraint they are allowed to utilize when facing an aggressor. There must be a removal of the permission to continue with chokeholds and include safer alternatives or specific language on techniques that are allowed to prevent any officer to feel that this policy is left open to their interpretation in times of quick action. "A Post survey of the 65 largest U.S. police departments found that 46 prohibit chokeholds in their use-of-force policies, while 44 prohibit carotid (KU-Roded) holds in those policies. These formal rules list the tactics and techniques officers may or may not use on suspects in various scenarios and can be critical tools in holding officers accountable, ".

I believe that amending this bill to specify tactics and techniques utilized by police officers and ending the permission for chokeholds and methods alike will first, prevent a possible life to be lost due to improper action by a police officer, and secondly will further guarantee the intent of this bill to place proper accountability for officers and discourage police brutality to take place.

In Closing, I urge the committee to amend Bill No. 6004 – "An Act Concerning Police Accountability" – Section 29 to end the permission of chokeholds and specify tactics officers must use in order to end an open interpretation of restraining methods used by police officers when feeling they are in a dangerous encounter.

Karen Lau, Age 16
Norwich, CT

Dear Members of the Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force,
My name is Karen Lau and I am a member of the Robertsine Duncan NAACP Youth Council. I reside in Norwich. I am speaking on Bill No 6004 – "An Act Concerning Police Accountability." I will be speaking in support of amending Section 33 and Section 41.



Section 33(a) states, "...[The Office of the Inspector General] shall: (1) Conduct investigations of peace officers... (2) prosecute any case in which the Inspector General determines a peace officer used force found to not be justifiable ... or where a police officer or correctional officer fails to intervene in any such incident or to report any such incident... and (3) make recommendations to the Police Officer Standards and Training Council...concerning censure and suspension, renewal, cancelation or revocation of a peace officer's certification."

The Inspector-General must be an independent prosecutor who will investigate police officers for misconduct, deadly use of force, and "malicious, wanton, or willful" acts under Section 41e. State's Attorneys have repeatedly failed to charge police officers for excessive use of force. Since 2001, out of 76 investigations into fatal use-of-force or deaths in police custody in Connecticut, only one officer was arrested and later acquitted, according to the Chief State's Attorney's Office. The State's Attorneys found that out of 81 cases, 79 officers' use of force was justified. The Inspector-General should be an independent attorney not promoted from within the Division of Criminal Justice. The hiring of the Inspector General must ensure there is no bias, consider candidates of color, and ensure all investigations will be conducted fairly and independently. The Inspector-General should be granted investigative subpoena power from local governments and police departments to obtain testimonies. Subpoena power will prevent departments from hindering investigations into the deaths of civilians in police and prison custody and empower the Inspector General to criminally charge police officers for Constitutional violations.

Furthermore, eliminating qualified immunity will protect the right of citizens harmed by officers who used excessive force and committed violent misconduct, allowing citizens to bring legal action against police departments, officers, and towns for civil rights violations. However, qualified immunity allows officers to be immune from prosecution if they had "objectively good faith belief" that they did not break the law under Section 41c.

According to the Hartford Courant, police officers in Connecticut have killed 21 citizens by fatal shootings and use of force in the past five years. No officers were charged with any crimes with the deaths of the 21 citizens, facing zero consequences because they were protected by qualified immunity.

The Police Accountability Bill should be amended to allow citizens to hold officers accountable for constitutional rights violations without past precedent. Qualified immunity perpetuates a cycle of malicious police violence, no accountability or liability, and no justice for families of victims. The shootings of unarmed citizens by police officers cannot be swept aside by the justice system due to a legal doctrine that only protects abuses of power. Legislators who stood by our communities as we marched for racial justice must act now to protect communities of color who are most vulnerable to police violence.

In closing, I urge the Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force to support amending Bill No. 6004 – "An Act Concerning Police Accountability" – Sections 33 and 41 to expand who



can apply for the Inspector General's position and abolish qualified immunity to protect the civil rights of constituents to bring forth lawsuits against police departments.

Chanel Francis, Age 21
Bridgeport, CT

Dear Members of the Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force,

My name is Chanel Francis. I am 21 years old from West Haven, CT. I attend the University of CT as an accounting major and Spanish minor. What police accountability looks like to me is an officer that can take ownership for their actions regardless of the outcome of the situation. I believe that for someone to wear a badge and carry a harmful weapon, they should be fully prepped with all the possible situations that can occur once out in the field. The best way to prepare these officers is to make sure there is a concrete understanding of what the civilians expect of our local law enforcement as compared to what the local law enforcement actually delivers.

Though I personally have no experience with police officers, positive or negative, I have friends and family who have. I have witnessed my father harassed as a black man, minding his own affairs, and taken into holding. As a child I did not understand the circumstance or if there was any prior information that I was not aware of. But there was not. I grew to realize my father was one of the many black men who was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Now that I am a young adult, I worry about my brother navigating through the world as a young, black man. I think more about ways in which I will be able to hold the police accountable for their actions whether it be through protest, letters, emails, etc. But I as an individual can only get so far when going against law enforcement. It is up to the chiefs of police and the officer(s) in question to take ownership of what was done so that we can attain justice.

I urge this committee to continue to support the Police Accountability bill.