



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony on House Bill 6597, An Act Concerning Accreditation,
Reporting Requirements, Mental Health, Data Storage Services and
Training of Law Enforcement Officers**

Senator Bradley, Representative Horn, Ranking Members Champagne and Green, and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:

My name is Kelly McConney Moore, and I am the interim senior policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony on House Bill 6598, An Act Concerning Accreditation, Reporting Requirements, Mental Health, Data Storage Services and Training of Law Enforcement Officers.

The ACLU-CT is committed to ending police violence and racism in policing in all forms. Accountability measures alone are not enough. Connecticut must also divest from policing and reinvest in programs that build strong and safe communities. Policymakers must reduce policing's responsibilities, scale, and tools to build an equitable future for all people in Connecticut. To that end, the ACLU-CT was supportive of much of the work done by the legislature in Public Act 20-1 but has always emphasized that that bill constituted a first step. It also constituted a significant compromise bill, with police supportive of many of its policies, including many of the provisions vesting additional authority and power in the POST Council.

Accordingly, efforts to roll back provisions of the already-compromised provisions of Public Act 20-1 should be viewed with deep skepticism. Changing the standards and the rollout time for various compliance and reporting procedures under section 7-294 may be appropriate, but this Committee should seriously consider whether that is the case before approving such changes. Likewise, this Committee should review

closely the intended purpose of the behavioral health assessments required under Public Act 20-1 when it assesses the need for and validity of Section 3 of this bill.

We also caution this Committee to seriously consider whether the POST Council is the right body to create a curriculum for police interactions with people with disabilities. The ACLU-CT is concerned that a requirement that the POST Council merely consult with disabled people and advocates for disabled people is insufficient to ensure that the POST Council creates a policy that truly protects disabled people from police violence. In Connecticut, where many of the people police kill and Tase are in mental health crisis or have contemporaneous drug use or alcohol dependence,¹ getting this policy right is a matter of life and death. We urge this Committee to give more power to impacted people in creating this curriculum.

The ACLU-CT urges this Committee to be incredibly judicious about rolling back the moderate reforms that it passed in Public Act 20-1 last year. For that reason, we ask this Committee to closely examine the changes proposed in House Bill 6597 and reject them unless there is compelling evidence that they are necessary. We also caution this Committee that, when it comes to creating best practices for police interactions with the disability community, the best available experts should be tasked with the job, to ensure sure that disabled people and people in crisis do not continue to be killed at the hands of police.

¹ Since official record keeping began in 2001, police in Connecticut have killed or used deadly force against over 80 people. *See Reports on the Use of Force by Police Officers*, Division of Criminal Justice, *available at* <https://portal.ct.gov/DCJ/Whats-News/Reports-on-the-Use-of-Force-by-Peace-Officers/Reports-on-the-Use-of-Force-By-Police-Officers>. While it is impossible to quantify with exactness, a large proportion of those people were in mental health crisis or under the influence of substances. A Hartford Courant review of police shootings in the last five years reported that at least 20% of the people killed in that time period were suspected to be in mental health crisis or had chronic mental health problems. Nicholas Rondinone, "Police have killed 21 people in Connecticut in the past five years. Here's a look at those deadly encounters." Hartford Courant, Jun. 5, 2020, *available at* <https://www.courant.com/breaking-news/hc-news-clb-deadly-police-shootings-past-five-years-20200605-0l2kfpmh2ngrnhq7hnzcvs5rqy-story.html>. In the state, at least 33% of people Tased in 2015 were described as "emotionally disturbed" at the time of Tasing, while 13% were identified as suicidal. James Post, "Study shows CT cops Taser minorities disproportionately." Yale Daily News, Aug. 31, 2106, *available at* <https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2016/08/31/study-shows-ct-cops-taser-minorities-disproportionately/>. Nationwide, people with untreated mental illness are sixteen times more likely to be killed by law enforcement. "People with untreated mental illness 16 times more likely to be killed by law enforcement." Treatment Advocacy Center, *available at* <https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/key-issues/criminalization-of-mental-illness/2976-people-with-untreated-mental-illness-16-times-more-likely-to-be-killed-by-law-enforcement->. A 2018 analysis found that a quarter of people fatally shot by police suffered from a mental illness.¹ People killed by police also have high levels of contemporaneous drug use (26.7%) or alcohol dependence (22.7%). Jennifer Mascia, "The growing movement to send counselors – not cops – to mental health crises." The Trace, Sept. 28, 2020, *available at* <https://www.thetrace.org/2020/09/alternatives-to-police-defund-public-safety-mental-health/>.