



Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection

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3/06/2024

Ronnell A. Higgins, Interim Commissioner of the Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Testifies in Favor of Strengthened Police Data Reporting

Ronnell A. Higgins, Interim Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, testified Wednesday in favor of legislation that would strengthen the reporting of data by police officers.

“The integrity of our state’s law enforcement records, and the accurate input of information into those systems by law enforcement officers, is of paramount importance,” Higgins told the General Assembly’s Judiciary Committee Wednesday in support of [House Bill 5055](#), submitted by Gov. Ned Lamont.

The proposed “Act Strengthening Police Data Reporting Requirements” makes it illegal to submit a false statement in a law enforcement record. The legislation would also require the reporting of any possible crimes by police officers to the Office of the Chief State’s Attorney. Unlawful acts could also be the basis for revocation of an officer’s certification by the Police Officer Standards and Training Council.

Commissioner Higgins said that accurate data collected by “all stakeholders in the criminal justice system” is relied upon by police, prosecutors, judicial officers, the media, researchers and citizens. Recent data reporting problems by the Connecticut State Police demonstrate “detrimental effect on all law enforcement when public confidence in the accuracy of police databases is challenged,” Higgins testified.

“Gaps in existing law may not sufficiently address the rare situation when an officer knowingly inputs incorrect data in a computer system such as racial profiling data, as opposed to when that officer knowingly falsifies a written instrument, such as a report,” Higgins said.

Significantly, the proposed legislation is not aimed at “an officer who acts inadvertently, accidentally, or in mistaken good faith. Such acts, though regrettable, are not criminal,” Higgins said.

“We must support our local and state police and look for ways to make their jobs easier and safer,” Higgins said. “DESPP thinks that this measure will strengthen public confidence in databases under the Alvin W. Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act.”

In testimony submitted to the committee, Gov. Lamont said the legislation only targets “intentional and deliberate misconduct by law enforcement officers.”

“The integrity of our law enforcement systems must be beyond question because we rely on this data to ensure that we are keeping the public safe,” Gov. Lamont said. “Crucially, we also use the data to track our progress in ensuring the absence of racial profiling.”

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