



"The Only Union for Police Officers and 911 Dispatchers"

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Dear member:

You have learned by now that a House and Senate Conference Committee last evening released a compromise bill aimed at instituting broad-based policing reforms in Massachusetts.

The legislation, S2963, is scheduled for debate today in both the House and Senate, and votes in both chambers are expected quickly.

With your fierce commitment and dedication, the Massachusetts Coalition of Police has helped lead the fight to represent the interests of police officers and their families as a grossly unfair and opaque conference committee process played out in secret. We now know that process has ended in the same way it began - with law enforcement professionals who protect the citizens of this Commonwealth each day being disregarded, dismissed and disrespected.

The final compromise legislation is a final attack on police officers by lawmakers on Beacon Hill. It is 129 pages crowded with punitive measures, layers and layers of new bureaucracy and the abridgement of basic due process rights of police. It was delivered with almost zero notice and zero time for our leadership, our legal team and our members to process it before debate and votes were scheduled.

It is plainly clear why the conferees have avoided transparency at all costs: their intent was to eliminate basic rights for police that are enjoyed by all public employees. The proposed Massachusetts Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission – with minimal representation from those experienced in law enforcement - would have the power to revoke an officer's certification and end his or her employment even before a complete internal investigation and disciplinary hearing is carried out.

The bill also seeks to immediately strip immunity from officers who are de-certified at the whim of this commission, even as the broader issue of qualified immunity would be subject to a full and public hearing and review process in 2021. You fought hard with other police organizations to get that open and public hearing process on QI included in the bill, and you won that fight. But the POST Commission's excessive power to end the livelihood of officers based on unsubstantiated and unproven allegations would surely render it a hollow victory.

MassCOP has been very clear - from the first meetings we did with community stakeholders back in June to our most recent public statements in November – that we support smart and productive police reforms. We recognize S2963's focus on enhanced training for police. We understand the importance of creating new commissions to address the challenges and historic biases experienced by people of color and people with disabilities, and we acknowledge the demand for harsh new punishments for officers who break the public trust and abuse citizens that are held in custody.



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But the bill as written simply goes too far in micromanaging police operations and establishing new protocols that will create dangerous situations and bring harm to not only police officers on the job, but to the public as well, and it does all this motivated by incidents of police violence in other states, not Massachusetts. Our Commonwealth, as you may know, has the third lowest rate of police killings in the entire nation, yet the conference committee has taken a radical, cruel swipe at those sworn to protect and serve. They seek to punish police just for being police.

I am asking you to join us in calling on the 66 House members who chose to support us back in July to once again stand with Massachusetts police and oppose this legislation, and for each of them to ask just one other member to also join in opposition. Start calling right now! Start sending emails! Encourage your friends and family to do the same. Don't stop until we know how it ends.

You can find your State Senator and State Representative at www.wheredoivotema.com (enter your address, if you don't already know), then go to www.malegislature.gov to receive their phone number and e-mail address.


The message is simple: "S2963 MUST NOT pass the House. It hurts police and their families, and it threatens public safety for all citizens of Massachusetts. Please stand with law enforcement and vote NO."


We are preparing for every possible outcome, and we know we are up against the influence and iron hand of House and Senate leadership.

Make no mistake: MassCOP will lead the way in appealing to Governor Baker to veto this bill if the conferees get their way. What was supposed to be a reasonable and thoughtful process to establish sensible police reforms is now a runaway train that must be stopped.

Sincerely,


Scott Hovsepian
President


John Nelson
First Vice President


Robert Murphy
Secretary/Treasurer


Timothy King
In-House Counsel