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Written Testimony Opposing Senate Bill 258, An Act Concerning Police Patrol Vehicles That Require Dashboard Cameras and the Acquisition of a Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected Vehicle

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

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 258, An Act Concerning Police Patrol Vehicles That Require Dashboard Cameras and the Acquisition of a Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected Vehicle.

The ACLU-CT believes that highly militarized policing should be defunded in favor of investing those funds into the programs, resources, and services that truly create stable, healthy, and safe communities. Highly militarized police units and equipment turn communities into war zones. Neighborhoods are not battlegrounds, and no arm of the government should be treating Connecticut residents like wartime enemy combatants. Despite that, militarized units have proliferated across Connecticut¹ and police frequently and inappropriately deploy them.² Connecticut must divest from this type of policing rather than encouraging it.

The ACLU-CT opposes legislation that facilitates the possession of military equipment by police departments. Over the past few decades, policing in America has

¹ Radley Balko, *Small-Town SWAT Teams Proliferate in Western Massachusetts*, WASH. POST (Nov. 13, 2017), available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2017/11/13/small-town-swat-teams-proliferate-in-western-massachusetts/>.

² Rob Ryser, *Local Police Well-Armed with Surplus Military Equipment*, STAMFORD ADVOCATE (Aug. 30, 2014), available at <https://www.stamfordadvocate.com/local/article/Local-police-well-armed-with-surplus-military-5724525.php>; see also MariAn Gail Brown, *A Costly SWAT Raid Gone Wrong*, CT POST (Feb. 23, 2013), available at <https://www.ctpost.com/local/article/A-costly-SWAT-raid-gone-wrong-4303215.php>.

become unnecessarily and dangerously militarized, largely due to federal programs that allow local and state police units to acquire surplus weapons of war.³ Police more often deploy militarized police units in areas with high concentrations of people of color, and there is scant evidence that these weapons have any effect on crime.⁴ As such, the ACLU-CT opposes Senate Bill 258 as legislation that facilitates the unnecessary militarization of the police and urges this Committee to do the same.

³ *War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing*, ACLU (June 2014), available at <https://www.aclu.org/issues/criminal-law-reform/reforming-police/war-comes-home?redirect=war-comes-home-excessive-militarization-american-policing>.

⁴ Anna Gunderson, Elisha Cohen, Kaylyn Jackson Schiff, Tom S. Clark, Adam N. Glynn & Michael Leo Owens, *Counter Evidence of Crime-Reduction Effects From Federal Grants of Military Equipment to Local Police*, NATURE (Dec. 7, 2020), available at <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-020-00995-5>; Jonathan Mummolo, *Militarization Fails to Enhance Police Safety or Reduce Crime But May Harm Police Reputation*, 115 PNAS 9181 (Sept. 11, 2018), available at <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1805161115#executive-summary-abstract>.