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**TESTIMONY ON H – 5260 –
AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL PROCEDURE – SENTENCE AND EXECUTION**

In the wake of the killing of six officers in Dallas in 2016, legislators across the country began proposing bills like the one at hand today, by expanding hate crime protections to police officers and other occupations. These bills, which are commonly referred to as “Blue Lives Matter”, instead of making police safer, aim to criminalize protesters and groups that are already targeted by law enforcement.

Police work is undoubtedly dangerous and stressful. However, crimes committed against first responders simply because of their occupation is infrequent, and crimes against police in general, regardless of motive, are at an all time low according to FBI data. The deaths of the officers are tragic, but not evidence of a war on police. Rather than focusing on how to address a non-existent problem, we need to focus on addressing the very real and pressing problem of how poor communities and people of color are targeted by biased policing, mass incarceration, systematic neglect, and laws that protect police from being held accountable when they act improperly.

Expanding the provisions to include police officers in hate crimes– the same as criminal offenses aimed directly at African-Americans or members of the LGBTQ community – devalues the decades-long discrimination that truly marginalized communities have faced. Police officers are valued public servants, not members of a minority group.

A more useful approach to mending police and community relationships should be to create a better working environment for police officers through building community partnership and trust. Enacting this legislation will only serve to create more tension between public servants and marginalized communities.