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Citizen Oversight Model Concepts

Several principles have been voiced by various stakeholders throughout the state to guide thinking about citizen oversight of law enforcement. They include:

- 1) Transparency
- 2) Accountability
- 3) Diversity
- 4) Impactfulness

To that end the following broad suggestions have been offered:

- 1) Community oversight of law enforcement should be structured on a county-wide basis rather than by the extremely local municipal jurisdiction served by a law enforcement agency. Each oversight board would contain five or seven members from towns within the county, and these members would be elected to serve on a staggered rotating basis for four-year terms.
- 2) Contemplate a mechanism by which citizens are elected/appointed to these oversight bodies.
- 3) Concerning sheriff's departments - civilian oversight of a sheriff's department would be conducted by civilian oversight in a neighboring county.
- 4) Citizen oversight bodies must include "key voices", which is to say the voices of those communities that historically have been negatively impacted by policing.

One model of citizen oversight would be the State Police Advisory Commission, or SPAC. This model does employ to some extent the above-mentioned principles that have been suggested by stakeholders throughout the state. There are, however, several "tweaks" to the model of SPAC that were suggested that work to increase the power of the four principles noted above.

- 1) SPAC does not appear to be an inclusive group, nor one that is visible. One person applied a few years ago and never received even a response, which is of concern. While that experience was described as unimportant for this person individually, it might suggest a perception of SPAC as an exclusionary group.
- 2) The composition of the group ought to be further defined to ensure that the voices of People of Color are represented. Further, a person with a background in mental health needs to be included.
- 3) Broad input needs to be solicited concerning the constitution of public safety. What this notion looks like for People of Color is very different from the way that it looks for those

in privileged communities. Defining “public safety” would better help SPAC reflect broad community values in policing decisions.

- 4) Additionally, the required attorney representative on SPAC should be someone who works in the area of civil rights. This member could also be a public defender, since SPAC is meant to be a civilian entity. Having an attorney who represents police is inconsistent with that goal. Additionally, SPAC, a body that depends upon the appointment of members by the Governor, needs not to be seen as a partisan committee. Leaving such appointments in the Governor’s hands creates the impression of partisanship.