

From: Kelly Ayotte

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As a Nashua native and lifelong resident, I am proud of the dedicated men and women of the Nashua Police Department who serve our city and work tirelessly every day to keep our families safe. I had the privilege of working directly with the department when I served as a murder prosecutor and later as Attorney General of NH. The Nashua Police Department is excellent: nationally accredited, rigorously trained, deeply respected, and well managed by Chief Michael Carignan. The Nashua Police Department holds itself to the highest standards and most importantly, enjoys strong and productive relationships with the citizens of Nashua.

For over 100 years, the Police Department has benefited from the independent oversight of the Nashua Police Commission comprised of Nashua citizens who have decades of business and community service. Now, inexplicably, Mayor Donchess wants to strip the department of this independent oversight and seize control of the commission himself. Despite the clear and well-reasoned opposition of a majority of the city's Alderman, law enforcement, and many concerned citizens and business leaders, Mayor Donchess is going door to door, pressing forward to sell his idea that our police department should not have independent oversight and that he should take more control over the department.

Unfortunately, he has even ignored the logical middle ground of taking time to study and carefully review the implications of changing control of the commission.

Our police department operates effectively and benefits from the independent oversight of the current commission. As Nashua Police Chief Carignan said in a recent letter he wrote to City Hall leaders, *"They can't say one thing is wrong with our police department... our accreditation...got the highest marks you can possibly get. We had our protest last summer for Black Lives Matter. Jordan Thompson was on the radio saying there were problems in New Hampshire, but Nashua's not like that. We're different. We have a great relationship with them. What does that tell you about how we are running this PD. That's all been under a governor-appointed commission system."*

Given the effectiveness of Nashua's police department and the current oversight commission, it is unclear what is motivating the mayor's power grab. Does he

want to cut the budget of the police department? That would not make Nashua safe. Why would he want to inject more politics into the operation of the police department by pushing this change? What will happen if the police department needs to investigate allegations involving City Hall like happened in the early 1990's when some of Nashua's aldermen were convicted of crimes? These and many other valid questions about the mayor's adamant push to erase the independent oversight of the police department.

I would urge Mayor Donchess to heed the valid concerns raised by Nashua Aldermen, business leaders, citizens and his own police department who wish to slow down and scrutinize this controversial proposal. They have rightly called for a series of public meetings to inform citizens about this important issue and to give them an opportunity to weigh in. It is also critical that we carefully examine how the mayor's proposal will impact manpower, budgeting, community policing and the daily operations of our police department. We have an outstanding police department in our city, and we cannot afford rushed or reckless change.

Kelly Ayotte a Nashua resident served as US Senator for NH from 2011-2017 and Attorney General from 2004-2009.