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Testimony to the Judiciary Committee

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We support **RB #5210, AAC Enforcement to Speeding and Traffic Control Signal Violations**. Many communities are experiencing both shortages of police officers and heavier traffic on their roads. The result has been a visible increase in disregard for traffic laws.

Officers are available for traffic duty less often and in fewer numbers. Hasty drivers have noticed. There are so many speeders that officers have time to stop only the most flagrant, letting the lesser lead-footers escape.

Inconsiderate drivers barge through red lights, bullying the law-abiding into surrendering the right of way. Even if a police officer is present to see the violation, it's difficult to catch the violator without also running the red.

More traffic and less enforcement is bad news for safety. Speed causes many accidents, and raises the level of injury or damage in still more. Red light violations increase the risk of right-angle collisions, which are exceptionally dangerous.

But there is technology which can tip the balance back in favor of safety. This bill will allow technology—a factor in so many aspects of our lives—to save lives by improving driver behavior.

There are automated traffic enforcement systems which can measure speed with precision and take video images of the violations. Likewise, they can capture red-light violations, depicting the light, the car, and the tag number. They can even prevent crashes by extending the light cycle for oncoming traffic when a driver blows the red.

These systems can work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and can detect more violations than the most diligent officer. They provide evidence which the violator is hard-pressed to refute. But coupled with warning signs and publicity, they persuade drivers to obey the law, reducing violations and increasing safety.

This technology is not free. This bill authorizes municipalities to conduct automated enforcement by ordinance and to retain the fines collected, thus offsetting the cost of equipment, installation, and administration. (The state benefits, too, getting half the fine for violations of state-maintained lights.)

The bill provides that violations will not be reported to the Centralized Infraction Bureau for inclusion on driving records or assessment of points. Rather, it treats violations like parking tickets, with similar appeal system and lower fines. Likewise, it presumes the registered owner to be the operator, making it unnecessary to photograph and identify the driver. These provisions should overcome objections about privacy.

In fact, such objections are misplaced. Connecticut's roads are public places, where drivers are already subject to video surveillance by DOT, the media, and many commercial security systems. Nevertheless video enforcement systems record only when there is a violation. The benefit in safety far outweighs the minimal intrusion upon dubious privacy.

Municipal police chiefs get far more complaints about traffic than we do about crime, and for good reason. Few citizens witness crime, but most are immersed in traffic daily, and many see violations. Careless driving causes death, injury, and damage, and it worries all drivers and pedestrians. You have the opportunity to apply a 21st-century solution to a pervasive contemporary problem. We hope you'll take it.