

Legislative Testimony
27 February 2006

Testimony by Michael P. Barton Before the Judiciary Committee

RE: HB 5210 - AN ACT CONCERNING ENFORCEMENT OF SPEEDING AND TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNAL VIOLATIONS.

Good afternoon Sen. McDonald, Sen. Handley, Rep. Lawlor, Rep. Spallone and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Michael Barton, I am a resident of Hartford, and I live on Prospect Avenue. I am here today to speak in favor of HB 5210 - An Act Concerning Enforcement Of Speeding And Traffic Control Signal Violations.

This is an important and challenging topic that affects the public's safety, and I applaud you for taking it up.

A number of residents on both sides of Prospect Avenue (Hartford and West Hartford), have been trying to resolve two significant motor vehicle issues in our neighborhood – the block between Asylum and Albany Avenues. The first is excessive speed (30 to 40 mph over the posted 25 mph limit) of a number of vehicles using the street. The second, is the high volume of vehicles in a residential neighborhood. There have been a number of accidents and near fatalities and we are trying to find a way to make the area safer – for us that live there, our children, our visitors, and the people that use the road.

We have worked with the City of Hartford to make some changes, including increased police patrol with laser, lines painted on the sides of the street to make it look narrower (and hopefully cause people to slow down), and installation of two stop signs. Our longer-term plans include the installation of a device that flashes an oncoming vehicle's speed, and if it is exceeding the posted speed limit, that device would take a photograph of the car, record the time and speed, and a speeding ticket would then be sent to the owner of the vehicle.

Beyond Prospect Avenue, looking at the much bigger picture though, the roads of Connecticut have been getting less and less safe. An unacceptable number of vehicles seem to be exceeding posted speed limits by dangerous levels, running stop signs, turning right on red without stopping, and running red lights at intersections. Something needs to be done.

The Police, no matter how small or great their number, can only be in so many places at one time. HB 5210 uses the term: "Automated Traffic Enforcement Device." The key word here is automated. Additionally, some of these devices can be mobile. Such devices can go a long way toward changing the behavior of a number of drivers – hopefully a large enough number to make our streets safer.

I am very familiar with the technology that drives these devices. It's not only impressive, but continues to improve, and the costs for high quality service are lower than in the past. I realize there are concerns of privacy issues and worries about "big-brother," but these concerns are misplaced. I believe there are far more people, than not, willing to give up certain minor inconveniences in order to make our streets safer.

I encourage you to support this Bill and see it through its passage.

Thank you for your time.