



State of Connecticut
DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

TESTIMONY OF CHIEF STATE'S ATTORNEY CHRISTOPHER L. MORANO

**IN SUPPORT OF:
H.B. NO. 5614 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING
THE IMPERSONATION OF A POLICE OFFICER, INSPECTOR OR FIREFIGHTER**

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
MARCH 14, 2006**

The Division of Criminal Justice respectfully requests the Committee's Joint Favorable Report for H.B. No. 5614 (RAISED), An Act Concerning the Impersonation of a Police Officer, Inspector or Firefighter. This bill was introduced at the request of the Division of Criminal Justice to (1) protect the public safety, and (2) protect those whose job it is to protect the public safety, i.e., our law enforcement officers and firefighters.

Section 1 of the bill expands the current law dealing with the impersonation of a police officer to include Inspectors from the Division of Criminal Justice and firefighters. Currently it is a crime to impersonate a municipal police officer or a member of the Connecticut State Police, but not an Inspector of the Division of Criminal Justice, who also are sworn law enforcement officers. Nor does the current law apply to firefighters, who are also critical public safety personnel.

Our Inspectors conduct criminal investigations and have the same powers of arrest as municipal and State police officers. As such, the impersonation of an Inspector would pose the same public safety concerns.

The second section of the bill deals with strengthening the existing law governing the impersonation of any of these public safety personnel, i.e., police officers, Inspectors and firefighters. This section would make it a class C felony to impersonate an officer in order to commit a crime.

We have seen an increase in the number of incidents nationally where criminals are posing as law enforcement officers to facilitate crimes such as home invasions, street robberies and kidnappings. An example is an incident that occurred in Hartford in November 2004. The police obtained an arrest warrant for a Springfield, Massachusetts, man who was conducting motor vehicle stops and stealing credit cards and cash from the victims. The man carried a badge, handcuffs and a portable radio to further his impersonation.

Other cases have had much more serious ramifications. In Dallas, Texas, there was an incident where six men purporting to be members of a police SWAT team committed a home invasion. In

Memphis, Tennessee, criminals declaring "Police, FBI, open up" invaded a home. And these are just two incidents of many.

These crimes represent a clear threat to the public safety. In addition, they pose a special threat to duly sworn officers, as they increase the likelihood of officers encountering armed or other resistance during the execution of search warrants. The occupants may claim – honestly or otherwise – that they believed they were being victimized by home invaders and were thus justified in using force to protect themselves.

H.B. No. 5614 would make a minor but important change to the law by adding the impersonation of an Inspector of the Division of Criminal Justice or a firefighter to the impersonation statute, and further protect public safety by strengthening the penalty when impersonation occurs in order to facilitate the commission of a crime.

The Division of Criminal Justice respectfully requests the Committee's Joint Favorable Report.

Thank you.