

Dear State Senators and Representatives:

I would like to add my support to proposed legislation enabling the use of red light cameras. Red light violations are common and serious in New Haven and other towns within the region. On average, I witness people running red lights several times per day. Red light running is particularly common at peak travel times, which is precisely when it presents the most risk to other road users.

Although violations may seem trivial to those breaking the law, the consequences of red light violations are very serious. Crashes caused by red light running are far more likely to cause an injury than those caused by other types of violations. According to one study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, red light running was responsible for 200,000 crashes in 2005, resulting in over 150,000 injuries and over 800 deaths nationwide.

The economies of urban areas such as New Haven and Hartford rely on safe pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular travel. While suburban retail areas may depend more on longer trips along high speed roads and highways, most shopping trips in New Haven involve short trips to a nearby neighborhood district. The fear of drivers running red lights is very common in cities like New Haven, and it discourages people from making these kinds of trips on a daily basis, which severely affects retail sales. In addition, only a small plurality of New Haven residents rely on a private automobile to get to work, indicating that many trips to work are short in nature and involve means of transit (walking and cycling) that place workers at a potentially higher risk when confronted with drivers who are speeding or running red light signals. Based on my conversations with numerous individuals in neighborhoods across New Haven, the perceived lack of safe streets also encourages many people to drive more, rather than walk or bike, resulting in significant household expenses that might be better directed towards education, health care and other basic needs.

In other words, when it comes to people running red lights, the perception issue is at least as important as the safety issue. Although traffic safety problems cause numerous deaths and injuries, they also have very significant indirect impacts on public health, education, community involvement, household savings, and economic development.

The New Haven Safe Streets Coalition, whose petition was signed by over 2,000 city residents, over 30 elected officials, 12 out of 12 of New Haven's

Community Management Teams and dozens of other local and state advocacy groups over the past nine months, has demonstrated that there is significant city-wide and regional interest in improved traffic safety. The petition called for a 90% reduction in traffic injuries and fatalities by 2015 - a goal that we must meet, given that these types of injuries are completely preventable. I believe that a 90% reduction in injuries would only be possible with greater enforcement, including red light cameras.

As I'm sure others will testify, red light cameras have been shown to be extremely effective at modifying driver behavior. Increased driver compliance rates have been found not just at camera-equipped sites, but at nonequipped intersections as well. In some cases, red light violations have dropped by 90 percent or more.

I hope that you will do everything possible to support the proposed legislation enabling the use of red light cameras on our roads. The vitality and safety of our state's towns and cities depends on it. Additionally, the use of such cameras could help free up law enforcement resources for other quality of life and safety issues, possibly providing significant relief to taxpayers.

Best regards,

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As a medical student at Yale the issue of traffic safety has become very important to me both as a matter of public health and, personally, from the necessity to cross dangerous intersections around campus on a daily basis. Traffic accidents are a significant public safety concern as they are a leading, and preventable, cause of death among young people in this country. According to the Federal Highway Administration, red-light running is responsible for 106,000 crashes per year resulting in 1000 fatalities and 89,000 injuries.[1] I have had some exposure to traumas and have found motor vehicle accidents to be especially tragic, due to the severity of injuries that can be inflicted and, most importantly, the frustrating reality that many of these could have been prevented. We should never resign ourselves to the belief that traffic injuries and fatalities are a fact of life. Permitting red-light cameras, which have reduced traffic injuries in other states in which they have been allowed, would be an important component of accident prevention.

Red-light cameras have been successfully installed in a variety of American cities and have reduced accidents by 25 to 45 percent.[2] A 2005 meta-analysis incorporating data from 10 controlled studies concluded that red-light cameras reduced crash-related injuries by 29 percent and side-angle crashes by 24 percent.[3] It is important to distinguish between total accidents and injuries, since low-speed rear end collisions may increase after the introduction of red-light cameras due to unanticipated braking at yellow signals, but these are less likely to result in serious injuries than the high-speed side angle crashes that red light cameras prevent. Two-years after the initiation of a red-light camera pilot program in Portland, Oregon, there was a decrease in angle and turning crashes at these intersections despite a slight increase in rear-end crashes.[4] Four years after installation, there has been a definite reduction in crashes and injuries at monitored intersections and the program has been expanded throughout the city.[5] I recently spoke to a Portland transportation safety official who credited the red-light camera program, in conjunction with a comprehensive approach to road safety, with reducing traffic fatalities to their lowest level since 1925. In the long-term, the presence of red-light cameras impacts the overall culture of driving and has effects that spill over to unmonitored intersections.

The introduction of red-light cameras naturally raises many concerns that should be addressed before their implementation. First, there is a perceived threat to civil liberties. However, surveillance cameras are already present in many public areas and law-abiding citizens go about their daily activities unmindful of their presence. Red-light cameras, by their very nature, are only triggered by unlawful activity, an unlawful activity that causes many injuries and deaths, and their presence is clearly indicated for deterrent effect. Second, there are concerns over proper identification of the drivers of offending vehicles. Although direct police enforcement of intersections would address this issue, police traffic enforcement invites its own safety hazards and diverts valuable police resources from other crime-prevention activities. Furthermore, red-light cameras are active 24 hours a day and are non-discriminating in their enforcement. It may be possible to obtain a photo of the vehicle driver in addition to the license plate or it may be better for infractions recorded by red-light cameras to result in civil rather than criminal penalties, without the attendant threat of point deduction and increased insurance

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premiums, if this approach is less controversial. Finally, it is important to remember that red-light cameras are first and foremost tools to improve road safety, not revenue-generating machines. Cameras should only be installed only at high-risk intersections and in combination with other safety improvements. A study from Philadelphia showed that lengthening the yellow signal duration by one second reduced violations by 36 percent, which was followed by a further 96 percent reduction after red-light cameras were installed.[6] Therefore, yellow signal time should be lengthened to improve intersection safety, not shortened with the intention of ensnaring drivers, as has occurred in some cities after camera installation. Also, the financial relationship between municipalities must be transparent and without any hint of impropriety. These concerns are relatively minor compared to the enormous benefits resulting from camera installation, and I urge you to consider their adoption in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration,
Jonathan Romanyshyn

1. FHWA. *Intersection Safety Brief: Red-Light Cameras*. 2004 [cited; Available from: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersections/interbriefing/08came.htm>.
2. *National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running: Research and Statistics*. [cited; Available from: <http://www.stopredlightrunning.com/html/research.htm>.
3. Aeron-Thomas, A.S. and S. Hess, *Red-light cameras for the prevention of road traffic crashes*. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*, 2005(2): p. CD003862.
4. Burchfield, R.M., *City of Portland: Red Light Camera Program Biennial Report*, C.o.P.D.o. Transportation, Editor. 2005.
5. Kuck, C.E., *Press Release: City to install red light cameras at six additional intersections*, C.o.P.O.o. Transportation, Editor. 2007.
6. Retting, R.A., S.A. Ferguson, and C.M. Farmer, *Reducing red light running through longer yellow signal timing and red light camera enforcement: results of a field investigation*. *Accid Anal Prev*, 2008. 40(1): p. 327-33.