

March 4, 2009

*RE: SB149 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INSTALLATION OF RED LIGHT CAMERAS BY MUNICIPALITIES & SB150 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INSTALLATION OF SPEED DETECTING CAMERAS ON HIGHWAYS.*

Honorable Senator DeFronzo, Honorable Representative Guerrero and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak in full support of these measures.

The level of disregard for the law on New Haven's streets is shockingly high. I assure you without exaggeration that every day, every single intersection I pass through has at least one traffic violation. My name is Juli Stupakevich and I both live and work in New Haven. I witness this lawlessness from the perspective of a pedestrian, cyclist, driver and user of mass transit. I am aware, able and educated enough to continue to participate in navigating New Havens roads but I am terrified of how close the roads most vulnerable users are to injury or death.

A yellow light has ceased to mean slow down. Instead, yellow signals to some when to accelerate. It has become a game. The problem has become so commonplace that fleet vehicles and even Police Officers have gained a reputation for being the worst offenders. They are a part of a culture of acceptance by fellow drivers to break the law.

A few days ago I waited at the intersection of Chapel and Temple to cross the street onto the green. A CT Transit bus was about 30 feet away from the stop line and had just finished closing its doors after passengers boarded. The light that it faced turned yellow. The driver had the temerity to accelerate from a full stop and drove through the intersection while the lights were red on all sides. I had begun walking through the crosswalk because of the walk signal, as did several other people throughout this busy intersection. Any one of us could have been injured or killed if we hadn't been able to scurry back to the curb.

Another intersection that has developed a reputation for particularly egregious violations is Grove and Whitney. A friend who is a Downtown Ambassador at The Town Green Special Services District was stationed at this intersection last Friday evening from 5 to 5:30pm. His attention wasn't focused on the activity of the cars but he still managed to take out a piece of paper and pen nine times and copy down the license plates of drivers running red lights. Often, several cars pass through a red light together. A police officer had travelled through the intersection with its' siren and lights on, obviously stopping traffic, and one driver clearly not involved in the pursuit had the audacity to follow the police car through the red light because the driver knew

all of the traffic was stopped. This is one intersection.

While these situations are not unique to the City of New Haven, its' conditions make it ripe for such a culture to fester. Its' small size makes it feel like it should be an easier trip across town. Its' challenging infrastructure sends mixed signals to drivers with wide, one-way streets that invite aggressive speeds that lead to narrow streets filled with pedestrian activity. Every day, New Haven attracts thousands of commuters and visitors travelling mainly by car, providing cultural and economic benefits for the entire state. These drivers suffer no consequences when their need for a quick entrance and exit from the city endangers others. They ultimately destroy attempts at fostering the very community they benefit from. I wish that this was enough of an incentive to drive respectfully and carefully but it is not.

I urge you to support these measures to install cameras in pilot intersections in the City of New Haven. I believe strongly that it would have a profound effect in reducing the number of violations and more importantly the level of safety in our community.