

March 2, 2009

Senator Donald DeFronzo
Chair-Transportation Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

RE: SB 149 -"An Act Concerning the Installation of Red Light Cameras Municipalities".

Dear Senator DeFronzo:

I am a pediatric emergency department physician who works at Yale New Haven Children's Hospital. I am writing you to express my support for SB 149-"An Act Concerning the Installation of Red Light Cameras Municipalities".

To me, the public health and public safety benefits of Red Light cameras are clear. In 2007, there were 900 deaths and 153, 000 injuries in crashes that involved red light running in the United States. About half of the deaths in red light running crashes are pedestrians and occupants in other vehicles who are hit by the red light runners. Motorists are more likely to be injured in urban crashes involving red light running than in other types of urban crashes.

Enforcing traffic laws in dense urban areas by traditional means poses special difficulties for police, who in most cases must follow a violating vehicle through a red light to stop it. This can endanger motorists and pedestrians as well as officers, and police cannot be everywhere at once. Traffic stops in urban areas can exacerbate traffic congestion. Communities do not have the resources to allow police to patrol intersections as often as would be needed to ticket all motorists who run red lights.

One of the arguments against red light camera programs is that there are in place solely to generate revenue. However, I believe that the objective of photo enforcement is ultimately to deter, not to catch, red light violators. While revenue is generated from fines paid by drivers who continue to run red lights, this is a component of any traffic enforcement program. Not all municipalities who use red light cameras generate excess revenue. The US General Accounting Office reported in 2003 on the contribution of federal funds to local use of photo enforcement technology and the amount of revenue generated by these programs. The report found that photo enforcement program revenues were lower than program costs in three jurisdictions, while the revenues in two other jurisdictions exceeded program costs.

Another argument against red light cameras is that if the timing of the yellow light is increased, it would better reduce red light running and crashes than red light cameras. In January 2005, the Texas Institute of Transportation concluded that extending a yellow light by 1.5 seconds would reduce red-light running by 50%. This same study also

demonstrated that red light cameras in intersections resulted in a 40% decrease in red-light violation, and that nearby intersections without red-light cameras also had a decrease in violations. In 2008, a study of the effectiveness of prolonged yellow light timing and camera enforcement of red light running in Philadelphia demonstrated that red light cameras provided larger reductions in red light running than increased yellow light timing.

I fully realize that in this economic climate, the price of installation and use of red light cameras is a very significant issue. I urge the Transportation Committee to seriously consider how to make heavily congested intersections safer for all users of the road, such as supporting a pilot program of red light camera enforcement in such areas. I would like nothing more, as a pediatric emergency medicine physician, to reduce the number of children I treat who are injured from being struck by cars running red lights.

Sincerely

Kirsten Bechtel MD
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Yale University School of Medicine
Attending Physician
Pediatric Emergency Department
Injury Free Coalition for Kids
Yale New Haven Children's Hospital

Bibliography

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