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Senator Don DeFronzo
Representative Antonio Guerrero
Co-Chairs, Senate Transportation Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

March 4, 2009

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

Dear Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrero and members of the Committee:

I appear before you today to respectfully request your support for Proposed Senate Bill 149, An Act Concerning the Installation of Red Light Cameras in the Municipalities.

New Haven, like many towns and cities, is facing an urgent problem with traffic violations. Driving behaviors in our city have degraded to such a degree that it is threatening our economic development, keeps kids from playing outside and is killing our citizens. I know this well, because on Easter Day in 2006, my friend and colleague, Lisa Tribanas was struck and killed by a car that ran through a red light in New Haven. She was 24 years old.

I strongly believe that the concern about the potential for the invasion of privacy through the use of still camera photography is seriously overstated. Taking still photographs of drivers who knowingly and willfully break the law by running through red lights on tax-payer funded streets is not an abuse of power. It is the responsible use of technology to protect the public from dangerous and unlawful behaviors. Additionally, if as a society, we were so concerned about surveillance and tracking of movements, than the E-Z Pass and driving navigational system technologies would not be the huge successes that they are. These technologies could theoretically be used to track an individual's movements in a way that is far more invasive than red light camera photos.

It is simply not cost effective to place a police officer on every corner to catch drivers who are committing traffic violations. While technology will never replace police enforcement, we should not deny ourselves the efficiencies of technology to affect changes on our streets. The negative effects of lawless driving fall most heavily on our dense, urban centers. Our police force does an admirable job dealing with a host of very serious problems: illegal drugs, prostitution and gun violence. Placing the additional burden of traffic enforcement on them without giving them access to the best technology to do this, is frankly unacceptable and represents a serious prejudice against urban dwellers. Without reasonable traffic enforcement, we are forced to live in an environment with a radically diminished quality of life.

In our modern, highly mobile society city-centers fiercely compete for the best businesses and the brightest employees. How will Connecticut compete with those cities that have taken seriously the call for greater civility on the public streets? The failure of our institutions to adequately respond to this need will damage our ability to grow our economy and retain our young and dynamic workforce here in this state.

I respectfully request that the members of the General Assembly find a way to address the legitimate concerns with the implementation of red light camera technology in a way that does not simply preclude their use.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on this matter.

Sincerely,

Erin Sturgis-Pascale