Prepared Testimony respectfully submitted to the Transportation Committee
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 Guerrera and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you in support of the above legislation....

My name is Rob Rocke. I have been a resident of New Haven's East Rock neighborhood for almost fifteen years. I am an alumnus of the Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and currently work for Yale University's Information Technology department. I do not drive to work, but rather commute to work either by biking or walking. My job responsibilities also necessitate that I travel to many different locations around Yale's campus on a daily basis: this, too, I do by foot and bicycle. I am therefore particularly sensitive to the public safety concerns of unsafe streets. Those experiences led me to join New Haven's Elm City Cycling, one of the first bicycling/pedestrian advocacy groups in town, and I have now been an active member of that group for many years. In fact, I currently sit on the newly appointed board of Elm City Cycling.

Our streets have become like the proverbial "Wild West." During every commute, I encounter countless incidents of motor vehicle drivers driving carelessly and irresponsibly, if not aggressively and downright illegally: they're talking on the phone, texting, speeding, **running red lights and stop signs**, and disobeying the basic rules of the road which mandate that they yield the right of way to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Of all these problems, motor vehicle drivers running red lights (and the related issue of ignoring "No Turn On Red" signs at red lights) seems to be one of the more blatant violations. It is also one of the most life-threatening. I've regularly counted one, two, and sometimes even three cars at an intersection that ignore a red light and blow through the intersection as if it's their right to do so.

Make no mistake. This is not a case of a close call. In fact, the way they handle their motor vehicles reveals their thought process: the anticipation followed by the acceleration. These irresponsible drivers clearly see and know the light will be red, but somehow they feel above the law. It's as if it's a law they don't have to obey! Or maybe it's just that past experience has conditioned these drivers into thinking that there is no consequence for their illegal action?

The behavior is dangerous. And yet there are clearly not enough police officers to cover every intersection at every time of day. Especially in this time of decreasing budgets, increasing cost-consciousness, and the competing demands placed on officers' time, I think now is the perfect time to embrace the new red light camera technology

available today to help the police enforce the laws on our books, especially when there's such a direct implication for an increase in public safety.

I've been a strong supporter of these red light cameras as a law-enforcement device for many years, and I've heard many of the privacy rights arguments against their use. But I am here to tell you that I am quite literally a "card-carrying" member of the ACLU. Privacy rights is an issue that I care about as much as I care about bicyclist and pedestrian safety, and yet I see no compelling contradiction between the two.

Driving motor vehicles is something we do in the public arena. Our behavior is visible for all to see. These cameras aren't invading the sanctity of activities we're performing alone in the privacy of our own homes. There is nothing private per-se in choosing to participate in our public roadway system, and claims of privacy shouldn't be a way to hide behind illegal behavior expressed in that sphere. In fact, I could just as likely sit on the corner at any one of these intersections as an individual with a camera and photograph these very same illegal driving behaviors.

So yes, I know there is some fear behind these imagined "Big-Brother" cameras, but there is the potential for so much to be gained. I think Connecticut at least owes its citizens a test-implementation of these cameras as a law enforcement device, with relevant metrics taken before, during, and after such a test deployment. It seems to me that's the best way to know if they will work, how effective they may be in changing driving behavior, and what privacy and other issues arise. I also think the appropriate fiscal conditions should be established for the city to get its fair share of the revenue generated from the tickets issued using this new red light camera technology.

I believe that the anticipated decrease in cars running red lights as a result of red light cameras being used as a traffic enforcement device will have a positive impact on the overall quality of life in New Haven, and I would like to offer my **enthusiastic** support for this piece of legislation.

Thank you,

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