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\* Pat Gerckens

**Testimony of Pat Gerckens  
AARP Driver Safety Zone Commissioner from Derby, CT  
Insurance and Real Estate Committee  
February 23, 2010**

Good Afternoon, Senator Crisco, Representative Fontana, and members of the Committee, my name is Pat Gerckens and I am from Derby. I have been an AARP Driver Safety Program instructor for several years and a Zone Coordinator for Southwestern Connecticut for over three years; I came here today to ask members of this Committee to please support S.B. 190, An Act Concerning a Four-Hour Accident Prevention Course for Older Drivers.

Anyone who is familiar with AARP's Driver Safety Program knows of its tremendous value to older drivers. We help to make older drivers more aware, alert and confident on the roads. We strive to give drivers alternatives and suggestions, including the best times to drive and practical suggestions on how to maintain a safe driving distance between their car and the one in front of them and how to navigate busy crossroads and intersections.

The only complaint we hear from participants is that the course is too long and should be done in half the time. All of the instructors agree and we know that we could supply the pertinent information without eliminating any important material, in four hours. We just have to rearrange and adjust our time, stick to the facts and, still maintain an interesting informative class.

Some of the participants have taken this course more than five times; while most were initially attracted to the course because of the insurance discount, when they attend their first class they find out how much they benefit from the course, and they keep coming back.

As an instructor, I personally enjoy large classes sometimes 38 to 40 students. Unfortunately, the number of students participating in driver safety courses is shrinking, and I believe that the overwhelming barrier to greater participation is the course length, which requires older drivers to attend two, four-hour days of class.

I being a very senior person would also find that too much. Sometimes in a two-day class we will lose a few people because, either they forgot or, something else came up.

In closing, I would ask you to sincerely consider approving a four-hour older driver course. I cannot think of any negative reason against it and know in my heart that, by approving a concise, four-hour course, we will attract many more seniors and help to keep them driving safer, more savvy and alert for a few more years.

Thank you for your consideration.