



Testimony of **Douglas M. Curtiss**
President Sonitrol Security Systems of Hartford

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Raised SB No. 150 "An Act Concerning Repeated False Alarms"

Chairman Stillman, Chairman Dargan and Members of the Committee:

Good Morning, my name is Doug Curtiss. I am the President and founder of Sonitrol Security Systems of Hartford. I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you today about the issue of false alarms and the impact they have on the community and public safety and express my support of this proposed legislation.

Since starting Sonitrol in 1972, right here in downtown Hartford, we have grown and are now the largest vertically integrated security provider in the state of Connecticut. Sonitrol designs, installs and maintains custom security solutions for over 10,000 homes, businesses, schools and municipalities throughout Connecticut. However, it's our on-site, fully-integrated central station monitoring center that has enabled Sonitrol to assist Connecticut law enforcement in over 9,000 apprehensions over the past 38 years.

The security industry has seen dramatic growth over the past couple of decades. Nationally, one out of every seven businesses and one out of every five residences has a security system. The public continues to demand more security to protect their businesses, homes and their loved ones. Unfortunately, along with the growth in the number of security systems, there has also been an increase in the number of false alarms.

When an alarm system is not properly installed, maintained or monitored, there is the potential for problems to ensue, including false alarm notifications to police departments. Law enforcement statistics show 96% of all alarms are false and research suggests that 10% of alarm system users are responsible for more than 80% of false alarms. Common user errors include unlocked doors, children, wandering pets, neighbors, relatives or visitors unfamiliar with the alarm system and triggering a false alarm. Repeated false alarms to local police departments will divert law enforcement from responding to genuine criminal activity and place a significant drain on law enforcement resources.

The security industry has a long history of working to reduce false alarms and is serious about commitment to educate alarm users on how to avoid false alarms by properly using and

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maintaining their alarm system. Security companies must take responsibility to inform alarm users about the proper use of their system and educate them on how to prevent false alarms. However, despite these efforts, the increasing number of systems in use and the lack of alarm user accountability continues to place great demand on law enforcement agencies, most of whom dispatch two officers to investigate each alarm. Faced with smaller budgets and greater demands, the problem of false alarms has escalated and become a huge burden on local law enforcement and consequently public safety. The reduction of false alarms requires the cooperation between private sector security companies, law enforcement and the alarm user.

In response to this challenge, I would like to recommend that the way to address the growing problem of false alarms is for alarm companies to be required to verify alarm legitimacy before calling the police. My recommendation to the Committee would be to require alarm company monitoring centers to implement two methods of alarm verification, Enhanced Call Verification and Electronic Alarm Verification, before dispatching the police.

Enhanced Call Verification (also referred to as Multiple Call Verification): The alarm monitoring company will call the alarm site immediately after the alarm is received but before law enforcement dispatch is requested. If the user answers, indicates an error and verifies his or her identity, no police dispatch is requested. If the user is not reached on the first call, a second call is made to another responsible party or owner at a different telephone number when the first call does not succeed. Often the second call is placed to a cell phone number and is normally made in cases where there is a busy signal, not answer to the first call or an answering machine is reached. I recommend that the bill be amended to include the use of Enhanced call verification before the Connecticut State Police be dispatched.

Electronic Alarm Verification: Electronic Alarm Verification is the use of audio and video technology to verify that an alarm is actually a crime in progress. When an electronically verified alarm is received, the building can be monitored with video or audio to determine if a crime is in progress. If the activity is normal, a false alarm is avoided. If the alarm monitoring professional, homeowner, or business owner, sees a crime in progress, the police are called. They are a witness to a crime in progress. We recommend that these types of electronically verified calls be exempt from the alarm fine structure, both to encourage the reporting of crimes to the police and encourage the adoption of these technologies.

I would like to thank the Committee for your time today and your consideration on this important issue. I would be happy to provide any additional information or answer any questions that you may have.



Douglas M. Curtiss
President

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