

**CONNECTICUT
STATE POLICE UNION**

Good morning, Chairman DeFronzo, Chairman Guerrero and Distinguished Members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Steven Rief, and I am President of the Connecticut State Police Union. I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today. I am here to speak in **OPPOSITION** of:

SENATE BILL NO. 346

AN ACT CONCERNING INSTALLATION OF SPEED DETECTING CAMERAS ON HIGHWAYS

I would like to start my testimony by stating that I am a Connecticut State Trooper and I represent approximately 1086 State Troopers, Sergeants and Master Sergeants.

The Connecticut State Police have the primary responsibility of ensuring that the citizens and visitors of Connecticut are safe. This includes safety of the motoring public on our highways, secondary roads, and in our communities. Each year our roadways become more and more congested. There is increased frequency of inattentive, unsafe and reckless driving. Traffic accidents and fatalities continue to plague our communities. As a society I think we all recognize how dangerous our roadways have become, making them less safe for us and our families.

The purpose of the proposed legislation would allow the state to install automated speed enforcement devices on state highways to identify motor vehicles violating state speeding statutes. While this may at first glance seem like a good idea, I am here to say it is not. Having State Troopers, police officers, patrolling our highways and in our communities is where we need to focus our efforts. Police Officers are responsible for enforcing all state statutes, not just those involving speeding. Having Troopers on patrol to assist motorists who are disabled, citizens that are ill or injured, or to remove roadway debris, is a necessary and daily occurrence for police officers. We respond to and investigate motor vehicle accidents and reports of erratic driving, detect and deter driving under the influence and aggressive driving, and other crimes that occur on our highways.

Installing speed cameras on our highways is one dimensional. In the end, the camera can only do one thing: detect speed. These speed enforcement devices would be deployed in fixed locations. Over time, motorists would become familiar with these locations, and would amend their speed through that area only to increase their speed once they have driven past the equipment. Would this really make our highways safer? In contrast, Troopers stop motorists at the time or in proximity to when the violation occurs, thereby immediately addressing the violation. And, motorists stopped for violations by police officers are not always issued a ticket as police officers use discretion. Often mitigating circumstances result in no ticket being issued, or in some cases a written or verbal warning is given instead. These are things that cameras are incapable of doing.

The current sworn staffing of Connecticut State Police is 1,137 (*the statutory minimum for sworn Troopers is 1,248*) which was the same staffing we had in July 2000. That's right, July of 2000. The answer is to dedicate more resources to take back our highways, lost to aggressive driving, driving under the influence, and high speeds. The answer is to allocate more personnel, or shift hours, so that we can conduct increased highway enforcement operations, while also being able to respond to the next emergency or motorist assist.

I would like to close by thanking this committee for your attention to this important issue and I am available to answer questions and provide you with any further information.

CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION
Steven Rief, President

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