



# CONNECTICUT POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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## Testimony Submitted to the Judiciary Committee

March 14, 2011

Chiefs Anthony Salvatore & James Strillacci, Connecticut Police Chiefs Association

The Connecticut chiefs support **Governor's Bill # 6391, AAC Penalties for Certain DUI Offenses**. The bill would allow the use of Ignition Interlock devices, house arrest with global-position-satellite monitoring, and drug-monitoring devices instead of incarceration in appropriate cases. Its use of technology would have multiple benefits: to reduce correctional costs, to prevent additional offenses, and to hasten an offender's return to a productive life.

We understand the rationale behind **SB #952** and **SB #1014**, which concern **Nonviolent Drug Offenses**. We don't want our judicial and penal systems overloaded by minor possession cases, either. But we'd like to call attention to a side effect of this proposal, possibly unintended.

Like many minor crimes, simple possession of marijuana is often a clue to more serious crimes. It's a common occurrence for a police officer to stop a car for a traffic violation, approach the car, and see a marijuana cigarette or smell its pungent smoke, which gives the officer probable cause to search the smoker and the car. It is also common for that search to uncover evidence of other offenses. Discovery of larger quantities of drugs, cash, scales and packaging may indicate a dealer rather than a mere user; a gun and a ski mask indicate a robber; tools, gloves, and loot are signs of a burglar.

Lest those criminals go undetected, we ask the Committee to add language clarifying that despite its infraction status, simple possession constitutes grounds for a search.

Likewise, we are sympathetic to **SB #1015** and **HB #6566**, which concern **Palliative or Compassionate Use of Marijuana**. We have no desire to add to the suffering of people with cancer, MS, or AIDS. However, we cannot endorse decriminalization of marijuana for the general population--we've seen too many people committing crimes or operating vehicles under its influence--and we are concerned that unless carefully regulated, palliative use will legalize general use *de facto*.

California's experience has been instructive. Pliable doctors have prescribed marijuana for conditions of dubious medical necessity. Certificates have proliferated due to lax controls. Demand has increased, and criminal gangs continue to profit by meeting it. Police despair at enforcing the marijuana laws which remain.

If this body wants to legalize pot, there should be honest debate on the subject. If it truly wishes to limit its use to the seriously ill, Consumer Protection must be given the resources to enforce the limits.

We have similar concerns about **HB #6554, AAC Emergency Medical Service for Drug Overdoses**. It is hard to argue against encouraging people to seek emergency aid, as long as this measure doesn't become a get-out-of-jail-free pass for dopers. We can visualize our dispatchers getting a 911 call for an ambulance whenever a drug dealer hears a knock at the door and the greeting, "Police with a search warrant," but perhaps our experience has made us suspicious.