



CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION

Good morning, Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and Distinguished Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee.

My name is Andrew Matthews, and I am the President of the Connecticut State Police Union and a Sergeant within the Connecticut State Police. As the Union President, I represent approximately 1,138 State Troopers, Sergeants and Master Sergeants. The Connecticut State Police Union membership takes great pride in protecting all Connecticut citizens and visitors, including those men and women working in construction zones. I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today. I am here to speak in **FAVOR**, in part and **OPPOSE** the remainder of:

PROPOSED BILL NO. 6110

AN ACT REQUIRING DOUBLED FINES FOR CERTAIN VIOLATIONS IN MUNICIPAL CONSTRUCTION ZONES AND PROHIBITING MUNICIPALITIES FROM REQUIRING POLICE SUPERVISION OF CONSTRUCTION ZONES.

- (a) ...(2) while construction work is ongoing within a municipal road construction zone designated in a conspicuous manner by such municipality, "

In FAVOR – The Legislature can send a strong message to motorists that there will be a zero tolerance for reckless operation in all work zones, including municipal construction zones.

As work zone construction increases on our roadways, there is also a significant rise in distracted drivers on our roadways, with motorists talking on their cell phones, texting, reading, surfing the internet and most importantly drunk driving. We have an obligation to prevent injuries and deaths of pedestrians, motorists, highway and roadway workers and our states law enforcement officers.

In 2009, according to workzonesafety.org, there were (217) fatalities in "non-construction zones" in Connecticut. However, during the same time period, there were **(6) construction zone fatalities**. In 2009, the United States had a total of 33,141 "non-construction zone" related fatalities and (667) fatalities within construction zones. As federal stimulus funds increase for road construction, the potential for even more injuries and/or deaths will also increase. Any deterrent is necessary, including the consideration of increased fines and even jail sentences for violators.

On September 2, 2010, the Connecticut State Police lost Trooper Ken Hall, a 22 year veteran, when his cruiser was struck by a reckless operator in his work zone on I-91. In 2010, Massachusetts State Police Sergeant Weddleton was fatally struck by a drunk driver while standing outside of his cruiser in a construction zone. In October of 2006, the New Haven Police Department lost Officer Dan Picagli, when he was struck while working in a municipal construction zone.

In recent years, the CT legislature approved an amendment to the statute to increase fines for highway construction zones. Paramount consideration should be given not only to the public but to the construction zone workers. There is no difference between highway construction and municipal roadway construction.

Based on the foregoing, we respectfully request this Committee to pass this needed legislation.





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Sec. 2. (NEW) (Effective October 1, 2011) No municipality shall require that a police officer supervise traffic at a construction zone on a municipal road, as defined in section 13a-110a of the general statutes.

We **OPPOSE** this proposed legislation:

Section 13a-110a: "Municipal road" means any public highway, road, street, avenue, alley, driveway, parkway or place, under the control of a municipality of the state, dedicated, appropriated or opened to public travel.

Studies have shown that flashing lights from emergency response vehicles warn motorists of a problem ahead and slows traffic. By removing law enforcement vehicles, there will be an increase in motor vehicle accidents, accident related injuries, fatalities of operators, passengers, pedestrians and construction zone workers. In addition, there will be an increase in workers' compensation and/or long term disability claims due to work zone injuries.

Law enforcement officers in Connecticut have the authority to enforce both criminal and motor vehicle laws to protect the public. *Without their presence, there will be no enforcement of the roadway posted signs or speed limits, including in the work zones.*

Although posting numerous signs (i.e. fines doubled, speed strictly enforced in work zones.) in work zones may help the safety risks; if there is no one with the authority to enforce the motor vehicle laws, it will not take long for the motoring public to form a learned behavior to ignore the posted signs. *In addition, what is the purpose of increasing the fines in construction zones if there is no one there to enforce the posted speed limit.*

US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Report of 1999:

The study conclusions state: "...police presence (a circulating marked police car) in the highway work zone was found to be effective in reducing the average speeds and percentages of fast-moving cars and trucks. The average speeds of the cars inside the work zone were 4.3 - 4.4 mph lower when police were patrolling the work zone compared to the no-police condition. Similarly, trucks presented speed reductions of 4.3 - 5.0 mph due to police presence. The percentages of cars and trucks exceeding the speed limit decreased by 14 percent and 32 percent, respectively, at a location before the work space. However, after passing the work space, cars and trucks increased their speeds." *The study authors recommend "to continue using police officers for speed control in work zones."*

Maryland Department of Transportation, Office of Traffic, Traffic Projects Division, Traffic Management Section: "Effectiveness of the Maryland State Police Care in Work Areas," September 1991.

"The motorists tended to ignore the work zone speed limit warning signs. They were traveling at speeds much higher than the posted speed limit even when the flashing police car was placed in the work area.... *Motorist non-compliance to these speed limit signs suggests the need for aggressive police enforcement at these work areas.*"

During these difficult financial times, agencies and towns are seeking ways to cut costs. However, when considering cuts, one should ask what is the value of public safety and human life. The reality is that if agencies and towns remove police officers from protecting work zones, not only does it increase the risk of potential injuries and/or deaths, it increases the potential for civil liability for failure to protect the public.

Based on the foregoing, we respectfully request this Committee not pass this portion of the legislation.

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