

# CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION

Good morning, Senator Maynard, Representative Guererra and Distinguished Members of the Transportation 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 1,096 State Troopers, Sergeants and Master Sergeants. Today, I am joined by members of our Connecticut State Police Truck Squad.

Today we would like to offer this testimony in honor of our brother, Trooper Kenneth Hall, who was killed in the line of duty on September 2, 2010, on I-91 while he was conducting a commercial motor vehicle stop. Ken was a 22 year veteran of the State Police and also a member of our Truck Squad. Ken's service and sacrifice is an example of how critical the State Police Truck Squad is to protecting the motoring public and communities surrounding our highways. We are here to speak OPPOSITION, IN PART TO:

## PROPOSED BILL NO. 1018

### **AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR WEIGH STATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTRONIC RENEWAL NOTICE AND THE ELIMINATION OF VISION SCREENING TESTS FOR MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATORS.**

In part, Bill #1018 proposes to transfer the responsibilities related to our State's (6) weigh stations and portable scale operations to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). This would eliminate the expertise of the (19) members of our State Police Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Unit (Truck Squad) who have full arrest powers, unlike the DMV Inspectors. We are opposed to this action because we believe that it would negatively impact public safety. This Bill may also result in a reduction of millions of dollars in Federal funds, would cost nearly \$497,546 in additional staffing for DMV and would reduce revenue generated from violators that chose profits over the safety of our citizens. Although the DPS budget calls for a savings of \$881,804 by consolidating weigh station operations into the DMV; in fact there is no savings because those Truck Squad members will remain employed with DPS.

The primary mission of our full-time State Police Truck Squad is to improve the safety of our highways by enforcing federal and state commercial vehicle laws, and weighing and conducting safety inspections on vehicles. This proposed Bill would eliminate the Truck Squad unit and leave the DMV as the sole commercial vehicle enforcement officers in our state.<sup>1</sup> As a result, there would be an approximate 40% reduction in Connecticut's dedicated commercial vehicle enforcement capabilities, which could have deadly consequences.

Currently, members of the Truck Squad and DMV inspectors cover (5) of the (6) fixed weigh stations in our state (Danbury, Greenwich, Middletown and (2) in Waterford, while DMV solely covers (1) in Union), and also perform portable scale operations across the state, where they work to keep local roads safe. Removing Troopers from truck enforcement may give the appearance of savings within the budget, however the state will spend even more money hiring new Inspectors and the State will lose funds which were once generated by the Truck Squad enforcement. As an example, in 2010, the (19) members of the State Police Truck Squad weighed over 319,000 commercial vehicles, and issued 14,360 tickets, which totaled \$4,983,377 in potential fines. Of that total, \$2,314,848 was solely attributed to overweight trucks.

Furthermore, the DMV only has approximately (26) Inspectors assigned to the weigh stations and portable scale enforcement. As such, the DMV does not have sufficient manpower to properly cover the State mandated shifts at the (6) fixed weigh stations and ALL portable scale operations, which are presently covered by State Troopers and Inspectors.

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Since this Bill was last proposed, DMV has hired approximately (8) additional DMV Inspectors, which was an additional expense to the State. If the (19) CSP Truck Squad Troopers were eliminated, these (8) new Inspectors will not make up the difference in a net loss of dedicated truck enforcement personnel statewide. The State Police presently has (75) Troopers that are Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) certified (which includes the (19) Troopers assigned full-time to the Truck Squad). However, (56) of those certified Troopers are assigned to patrol assignments at one of our (12) Barracks throughout the State. Those Troopers are so busy providing other services to the public, they rarely have the opportunity to conduct the (32) mandated truck inspections, per year, to maintain their MCSAP certification. **Our (19) full-time Truck Squad Troopers are vital to protecting Connecticut.**

If passed, the proposed Bill will significantly reduce the State's ability to inspect, detect and deter dangerous commercial vehicles on our roadways, as well as threats to homeland security. In an effort to keep our State safe from terrorist threats, CSP Truck Squad Troopers carry and have been trained in specialized equipment which can detect certain radiological materials being transported by commercial vehicles. **Having these Troopers positioned on our borders at the weight stations is strategic to our State's safety.** Additionally, fewer Troopers conducting inspections of overweight and oversized vehicles will result in increased danger on the interior roadways. The public needs to trust that our roadways and our family members are safe while traveling in and through Connecticut. We should never forget the **Avon Mountain and I-95 East Lyme commercial vehicle accidents that needlessly took a total of (7) innocent lives.**

In closing, as the state is experiencing a 3.6 billion dollar budget shortfall, cutting the State Police Truck Squad services will increase the risk to public safety and will only send a message to wrongdoers that commercial vehicle enforcement is not a priority. **As a result, in order to cut costs and increase revenue, companies and independent drivers will take more risks by failing to make necessary repairs and transporting heavier loads. Eventually, this will result in an increase in serious injuries, accidents and fatalities on our roadways.** Additionally, Connecticut will most likely see a dramatic decrease in commercial vehicle enforcement, which may result in less revenue and federal funding. During these difficult financial times, doing more with less, may work in certain areas, but not on our roadways.

We urge you to prevent these changes from occurring and continue to properly fund the State Police Truck Squad in the future. We thank the committee for your consideration on this important issue and would be happy to answer any questions.

February 28, 2011

**CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION**  
Andrew Matthews, Esq. – President

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<sup>i</sup> See specifically, subsection (d) of the proposed Bill states, in part, that "The Commissioner of Public Safety, **at the request of the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles** (emphasis added) shall assign one Trooper to each working shift... to patrol and enforce laws relative to the safe movement of all vehicles on the highways of the state." (Emphasis added).

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The Connecticut State Police Union is here to speak in OPPOSITION, in part, to proposed Bill # 1018.

- This proposed Bill would eliminate the (19) members of your State Police Truck Squad and leave the DMV as the sole commercial vehicle enforcement officers in our state.
- CGS:§ 29-7 gives State Troopers the authority to make criminal and motor vehicle arrests anywhere in the State of Connecticut. However, under CGS:§ 14-8 DMV Inspectors only have the *authority to make arrests or issue citations for violation of any statute or regulation relating to motor vehicles laws.*
- The State Police Truck Squad is the lead agency in ConnDOT “Oversize & Overweight” enforcement program, which is mandated by the Federal Highway Administration.
- In 2010, the State Police Truck Squad weighed and/or inspected over 319,000 commercial vehicles, and issued 14,360 tickets, which totaled \$4,983,377 in fines. Of that total, \$2,314,848 was solely attributed to overweight trucks.
- This bill would *reduce Connecticut’s dedicated commercial vehicle enforcement capabilities by approximate 40%* which could have deadly consequences to your constituents.
- If this bill is enacted, Connecticut could see a reduction of millions of dollars in Federal funding.
- DMV does not have sufficient manpower to properly cover the State mandated shifts at the (6) fixed weigh stations and ALL portable scale operations, which are presently covered by State Troopers and Inspectors.
- Our (19) full-time Truck Squad Troopers are vital to protecting Connecticut. In an effort to keep our State safe from terrorist threats, CSP Truck Squad Troopers carry specialized equipment which can detect certain radiological materials. *Having these Troopers positioned on our borders at the weight stations is strategic to our State’s security.*
- In order to cut costs and increase revenue, *companies and independent drivers will take more risks by failing to make necessary repairs and transporting heavier loads.* Eventually, this may result in an increase in serious injuries, accidents and fatalities on our roadways.