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Testimony of

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Transportation Committee
February 14, 2011

In support of

****Proposed S.B. No. 706 AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL INTERSECTION SAFETY SYSTEMS.***

****Proposed S.B. No. 822 AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT TECHNOLOGY.***

****Proposed H.B. No. 6178 AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE USE OF TRAFFIC CAMERAS BY MUNICIPALITIES.***

****Proposed H.B. No. 6179 AN ACT AUTHORIZING MUNICIPALITIES TO OPERATE INTERSECTION SAFETY CAMERA SYSTEMS.***

Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero and members of the Transportation Committee.

My name is Kirsten Bechtel and I am an Attending Physician in the Pediatric Emergency Department at Yale New Haven Children's Hospital. I am also an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the Yale University School of Medicine

As a pediatric emergency department physician, the public health and public safety benefits of Red Light cameras are clear.

In 2007, there were 900 deaths and 153,000 injuries in crashes that involved red light running in the United States. About half of the deaths in red light running crashes are pedestrians and occupants in other vehicles who are hit

by the red light runners. Motorists are more likely to be injured in urban crashes involving red light running than in other types of urban crashes.

The Connecticut Department of Health reports that unintentional motor vehicle traffic injuries were the third leading cause of injury-related emergency department (ED) visits in Connecticut from 2000 – 2004. Approximately 40,000 motor vehicle traffic injuries are brought to CT emergency departments each year.

In 2006 the CT Department of Transportation reported approximately 3,500 motor vehicle collisions associated with traffic control violations, of which 60% resulted in injuries.

It is clear to me as a physician that red light cameras save lives. A recent study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) demonstrated that Red light cameras saved 159 lives in 2004-08 in 14 of the biggest US cities by reducing T-bone crashes, which are far more dangerous and cause more deaths. Had cameras been operating during that period in all large cities, a total of 815 deaths would have been prevented. Red light cameras have also been shown to reduce red-light running at contiguous intersections in Philadelphia. In Washington DC, traffic fatalities have been cut in half during the 4 year period since red light cameras were installed at some of the most dangerous intersections as they are more likely to stop at the yellow light at intersections with cameras.

There are numerous reasons while automated cameras to deter and detect red light running are beneficial. Enforcing traffic laws in dense urban areas by traditional means poses special difficulties for police, who in most cases must follow a violating vehicle through a red light to stop it. This can endanger motorists and pedestrians, as well as officers. Moreover, and police cannot be everywhere at once.

I believe that legislation can be crafted to address the concerns of those who believe such cameras violate due process and are an intrusion into one's privacy. I also realize that in this economic climate, the price of installation and use of red light cameras is significant. Nonetheless, I urge the legislature to seriously consider how to make heavily congested intersections safer for all users of the road, such as supporting a pilot program of red light camera enforcement in such areas.

Sincerely

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