

**Abdul Shahid-Ansari, Greater Hartford NAACP,
Public Hearing, March 12, 2012**

Good evening, Chairman Coleman, Chairman Fox and Members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Abdul Shahid-Ansari and I currently serve as President of the Greater Hartford Branch of the NAACP.

In many ways, Connecticut tells a disconcerting tale of two states: Disparities between whites and minorities exist in health, education and criminal justice. In fact, just this month the media reported that Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be ticketed for traffic stops than White motorists. Connecticut should not be known for disparate treatment of any kind, and its leaders should consider addressing it a priority.

As you know, legislators first required the tracking and analysis of traffic stops in 2000, then required police departments to submit reports to the African American Affairs Commission. It is clear that lawmakers recognize the importance of this issue, but more must be done. Senate Bill 364 is the "more" Connecticut needs.

By requiring that reports be completed by all municipal police departments and that the data be reported to the Office of Policy and Management, Connecticut will finally be taking a much-needed step towards addressing racial profiling, because it is only through an ongoing commitment to meaningfully assessing these occurrences will our state have the tools to ensure that Connecticut is truly treating its citizens equally.

Last year, a similar bill came before the Connecticut General Assembly but was never voted on. What has very publicly played out in East Haven and continues to occur with less fanfare in cities and towns across Connecticut has made it clear that this legislation is long overdue.

I did not know Sen. Penn, but as a fellow African American man, I believe I know what was in his heart when he fought for the passage of racial profiling legislation. Connecticut owes it to his memory, and to every citizen in this State to ensure that a racial profiling bill is more than just words. Senate Bill 364 will appropriately honor Senator Penn, but more importantly, it will be an important step toward rebuilding trust in the minority community towards law enforcement.

Thank you.