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Testimony

In Opposition To H.B. 5458

An Act Concerning Municipal Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Devices At Certain Intersections Transportation Committee

March 12, 2012

Good afternoon Chairmen Maynard and Guerrero, Ranking Members Boucher and Scribner, and members of the Transportation Committee. I am here today to testify in opposition to **House Bill 5458, An Act Concerning Municipal Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Devices At Certain Intersections**.

Supporters of this bill like to point out the states that have implemented red light cameras. However, many states have also banned red light cameras, as well as a number of municipalities that have banned their use at the local level by public referendum. According to news reports, voters rejected cameras in seven out of eight contests last year alone. Additionally, they were repealed in another 15 referenda. After a long drawn out court battle over fees owed to the vendor from unpaid tickets, the City of Houston, Texas has also decided to repeal their camera law, even in lieu of the fact that they may have to pay millions of dollars in fines to cancel the contract. Fines, fraud, and injustice suffered by the citizens of these municipalities have been the fuel that has fed the major push to repeal automated enforcement throughout the nation. For every new place that is putting them up, there is an existing location that is pulling them down.

In 2011, red light camera vendor American Traffic Solutions (ATS) spent approximately \$84,000 lobbying in favor of automated enforcement in Connecticut. Earlier this year, we heard a press conference from the National Coalition for Safer Roads (NCSR). This non-profit advocacy organization not only received its start-up money from ATS, but also continues to receive funding from them. Furthermore, ATS Vice President Charles Territo is named as the secretary and director of NCSR, and James Tuton, the President and CEO of ATS, and George Hittner, ATS vice president of government relations, were also listed as NCSR directors. The appearance of impropriety should be completely investigated to provide that these cameras are sought for safety and not for dollars.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) study that is quoted as proof that red light cameras decrease accidents has been found to be erroneous. The study was peer reviewed and found to have been manipulated. The critique found the IIHS report "sloppy and inconsistent, reflecting a bias towards the insurance industry that IIHS serves." It is information like this and organizations with hidden agendas that proponents of the red light cameras have based their decisions on. However, if red light cameras worked as well as these organizations claim, why are they being shut off and banned all across the United States? There have been numerous studies that have shown red light cameras do not decrease accidents, but actually increase them.

The current legislation before us raises a few questions. Why was the number of 48,000 residents chosen as the population standard? Why not allow each municipality to enter into a contract service? Is the safety and well being of cities more important than towns? These cameras cost between \$75,000 and \$100,000 to buy and install. If municipalities choose to rent them the cost is \$4,750 per camera per month. That is equivalent to 95 tickets per month per camera that will have to be issued and paid simply to break even. We could find ourselves like Los Angeles, in which case the city ended up paying approximately \$1.5 million a year due to the fact that a number of tickets they issued went unpaid. Regardless of how the program operates, the vendor will have to be paid.

For cities that decide to have cameras, the process of adopting ordinances would begin. Not only would these costs be hard to administer in a municipal budget during these tough economic times, but other ancillary costs as well, such as police officer overtime to testify at hearings, the cost of establishing and operating a hearing process, and the officer required to review video of red light camera video tape.

This legislation poses a question of fairness. There is a disparity between tickets issued for running a red light in an intersection that has a red light camera and one that does not. A person who receives a ticket from a local police official for running a red light gets double the fine, has their license impacted, notification of it is sent to the DMV, and they must go to Superior Court to fight it.

Evidence shows the best way to change driving habits is through direct patrols and enforcement. The click-it-or-ticket campaign has lead to a 90% compliance rate of motorists wearing their seatbelts. In Canton, pedestrians may have to stand in a crosswalk for a minute or two until passing cars see them and stop. On the shoreline, if a pedestrian is within 10 feet of a crosswalk, traffic comes to a complete stop where pedestrian right of way has been strongly enforced. It is through these direct enforcements that safety has been increased. It is questionable as to whether or not the red light cameras will increase public safety.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify today. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

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