

**TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING  
ENABLING LEGISLATION FOR RED LIGHT CAMERAS PROGRAMS**

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY CHRISTINA SPIESEL 2/25/2013

Dear Committee Chairpersons Maynard and Guerrero and Distinguished Committee Members:

Last year I traveled to Hartford to testify against the plan to enable red light cameras by my community. I am a resident of New Haven and realized that I was opposing legislators and a mayor for whom I had and have great respect. But in this matter, I think differently. So this written testimony is in opposition to SB 634, HB 5554 and HB 6566.

It is my understanding that having been defeated last year this idea has returned to the State's agenda. Having heard the testimony from last year, these are some of the people whose concerns are often used to argue in favor of red light cameras: family members who have lost dear ones in traffic accidents and pedestrians and bicyclists who want cities to be more livable with calmer traffic. Less obvious are the business interests of the manufacturers, police departments who long for efficiency when they cannot sufficiently cover traffic during their regular duties, and cash-strapped cities who see this as a potential revenue stream. So it can seem like this would be a popular path to pursue. Let me outline the counter-position.

Looking at the history of this equipment, there are many municipalities that have removed the equipment after paying heavily for its installation because people hated it and it did not produce the kind of income stream they had fantasized. If this is the situation, the winner is the company that sold the equipment and the contract because they earned on the installation and earn on fees related to cancellation of the contract. A net loss for the cities and towns.

Do we really want to employ police officers in revenue generation for their communities? Isn't this a recipe for corruption of both their professionalism and the public's attitude toward their police departments? Having police work on revenue generation defines them as working against and not for the public interest when the public feels anger at the cameras.

Camera equipment has to be well maintained, well calibrated to accurately capture the reality unfolding in front of them. This is expensive in two ways. If it is properly done the financial cost of equipment maintenance is high. If it is done poorly to save money it is likely to result in injustice and the risk of legal liability.

Undeniably it is very painful to lose family and friends to traffic accidents or to have them maimed. But we have to ask whether cameras are the way to solve that problem. Actually, the data suggest something different. We can expect a loss of focus and attention to traffic and pedestrians as driver approach corners, worrying about capture by

cameras and we can certainly expect more rear-end collisions as drivers try to protect themselves from ticketing by stopping suddenly. In fact, the better (and less expensive) way to improve traffic safety is through training, traffic information and good traffic design. These are where we should put our resources.

There are additional issues that must be kept in mind as this question is thought out. Tickets based on this technology will surely be challenged at trial by people with adequate resources to be able to take the accusation to court. While these tickets will be contestable, it will be costly in time and maybe fees for people to go to court. So even if inappropriately given, folks may just give up and pay. This will become a sort of tax that will fall disproportionately in the shoulders of the more economically fragile people in our communities, people who need their cars to get to work. We are very far away from effective public transportation and it will not serve our communities to make the poor poorer. There are other options to making our streets safer – retiming of traffic lights and better design of intersections among them. The virtues of these solutions are that they do not deprive people of quality of life, they are safer, they are less expensive, and they will last.

Please vote no on forwarding this legislation. It may look good but it isn't.

Thank you for your consideration.

C h r i s t i n a S p i e s e l

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