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PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY – TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE – MARCH 8, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, Senator Stillman, Representative Mikutel, ranking members and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Glenn Terlecki and I am the President of the Connecticut Police and Fire Union. This union represents approximately 900 dedicated State workers in law enforcement and firefighting professions.

I am here today to testify in **SUPPORT** of:

Raised Governor's House Bill #6377, AN ACT CONCERNING ARREST POWERS OF MOTOR VEHICLE INSPECTORS.

Aside from being the President of the Connecticut Police and Fire Union, I have been an inspector with the Department of Motor Vehicles for almost 15 years. HB 6377 will statutorily define motor vehicle inspectors as "peace officers". For a number of years, legislative bills have been raised but none successfully passed with language similar in nature to this bill. There always appears to be a lot of confusion focused on the implication of defining inspectors as peace officers. First and foremost, motor vehicle inspectors are certified police officers who graduate with the same certification as all other police officers from the Connecticut Police Academy. In Connecticut state statute, inspectors already are defined as "police officers".

At some point in legislative history, the term "peace officer" became a way to define various law enforcement officer occupations in Connecticut, not necessarily just police officers. Some law enforcement officers that are covered under CGS 53a-3 and are not certified or trained police officers through the Connecticut Police Academy include; probation officers, correction officers, state marshals and judicial marshals.

I do not know the exact history behind the creation of the term "peace officer" but I would surmise that it was created in order to group various law enforcement officers, some who are police officers and some who are not, together under one definition. Over time the definition has expanded to include various job titles but has always excluded motor vehicle inspectors.

Adding motor vehicle inspectors to this definition does not increase our arrest authority, expand our jurisdiction or entitle us to more pay, benefits or change our retirement category. Presently, we already



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have arrest authority granted to us under CGS 14-8, we have statewide patrol and arrest jurisdiction as well as a State hazardous duty retirement. There is no fiscal note attached to this bill.

Four years ago, the Connecticut General Assembly passed legislation including motor vehicle inspectors in six (6) statutes mainly relating to use of force. Never before were inspectors protected under these very important statutes that specifically cover all law enforcement officers in the definition of “peace officer”.

Although inclusion in these six various use-of- force statutes affords inspectors most of the protection needed to perform the job, they fail to cover inspectors by the proverbial “umbrella” that other law enforcement officers are covered by. Many State laws use the term “peace officer” instead of police officer when describing specific actions.

Some examples include-

- Under CGS 53-206c a person that brandishes or exhibits a facsimile of a firearm in the presence of a peace officer shall be charged with a class B misdemeanor.
- CGS 53a-111 makes it a class A felony when a person intentionally starts a fire or causes an explosion at the scene where a peace officer could be subjected to substantial risk of bodily injury.

There are many other statutes in Connecticut law that reference “peace officer” instead of police officer. The passing of HB #6377 will ensure that motor vehicle inspectors are afforded the same protection as other brother and sister law enforcement officers.

Along with requesting the passage of this bill, I ask that the language of this bill be amended to a more encompassing and simplistic phrase. Though this raised bill has good intentions, the current proposed language is jumbled and wordy. It lists specific statutes under title 14 when inspectors would be covered in the definition of peace officer. The language misses the point. For example, this bill would cover inspectors when enforcing snow mobile regulations (something that is rarely ever performed) but not when issuing a speeding ticket (the most commonly performed enforcement action). I suggest an amendment to this bill that reads, “...an inspector of the Department of Motor Vehicles certified under 14-8 and defined by 7-294a”. Inspector’s arrest powers are granted and restricted under CGS 14-8 and



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CGS 7-294a defines inspector who graduate from the Connecticut police academy as certified police officers.

Many of you are familiar with the tremendous work that motor vehicle inspectors perform on a daily basis. For those of you who may be less familiar, I invite you to send a few hours one day with us as we patrol Connecticut's highways enforcing commercial vehicle safety, school bus safety, the regulation and enforcement of Connecticut's dealers and repairs and combat auto theft, title fraud and more. Motor Vehicle Inspectors are unsung heroes in Connecticut's law enforcement family. I ask for your support in passing and amending this bill granting us the protection that is much deserved.

Glenn Terlecki, President
Connecticut Police and Fire Union