

My name is Cindy Penkoff of Trumbull Connecticut and I am a life long resident of the state. I am here on behalf of myself and my family to testify on House Bills 5125, 6050, 6051, 6052 and Senate Bill 699.

I believe that just the attempt to bring tolls back to the state Connecticut is waste of valuable resources; time and money.

Tolls in any form are dangerous. We already have roads filled with distracted drivers, more so than 30 years ago could have imagined and now you want to install stationary obstructions and make them more so. Yes we know they are "different" now, but they are still in the way and will still cause traffic issues. We have all seen them in action. For the many that will try find a way around them, you will now increase local traffic in those towns, making them less safe. For a state so interested in public safety, you have a very interesting way of showing it.

I will venture to guess that 98% of the legislators serving in Hartford are here because you made certain promises to your constituents. I will bet your sound bites included:

1. We need to cut spending
2. We need to be more business friendly
3. We need a responsible budget
4. We need to cut taxes
5. We need to change the conversation
6. We need to communicate better
7. We need to be willing to work together

All of those have one thing in common. They involve effort. Real effort. This "recycled 50 year old idea" does not do that. It has no substance, it has no details, it is an illusion; and not a very good one at that.

Your proposal will take 4-5 years to implement, doing nothing about our current situation. You have no idea what it will truly cost, as the cost will escalate yearly with new union/state employees, maintenance and god know what other expenses. You have no idea what it will generate, therefore having no idea whether it will or will not do what you think it will do. Making this nothing more than a dangerous and expensive experiment.

Instead of decreasing the cost to live in Connecticut it will increase that cost for every person in the state; another tax. As you continue to argue that we must raise the minimum wage to a living wage you continue to increase the cost of living hurting yet again the small business owners in our state and decreasing job opportunities due to the increased cost of actually doing business in the state. This is nothing more than a shell game being played and you are using taxpayers as your game pieces.

If you ran your homes and/or businesses the way you run the state you would be living under a bridge and be unemployed. There is no common sense to this proposal.

This proposal is being put forth as a solution to raise money to maintaining our roads. What it really does is spend money we don't have and will give you yet another fund to raid for the spending you refuse to cut. Recently Sen. McKinney made a very clear and valid point. If you were really interested in maintaining the roadway you would not have raided the transportation fund of 100's of millions of dollars; or directed \$150 million of federal transportation funds for a busway, another ridiculous idea that does nothing to solve the spending problems of Connecticut just adds to it.

This is what I call low hanging fruit. Not what you were all hired to do. You were hired to cut unnecessary and bloated spending. Trim down oversized government that duplicates efforts and therefore cost. Find ways to be business friendly to attract more companies to Connecticut, not just shuffle around the existing ones, and make Connecticut a better place to live. You accomplish NONE of that with this proposal.

This "recycled idea" in fact does the opposite of all that. It makes it less attractive to travelers, it makes it more expensive to live here or move here, and it does nothing to reduce the size of government employees, the largest employer in our state. A statistic that continues to boggle my mind.

We demand that you stop playing games and do the jobs you were hired to do. The State of Connecticut can no longer afford to have you sit in those seats and pretend to speak on our behalf. We are drowning in a sea of debt and bad policy and you have sold all of our life boats for the promise of a bag of magic beans.

As I started this I told you who I was and who I represent. Although fiscal responsibility and your duty to live up to your promises is extremely important to me, as I would like to afford to stay in my home state, it is not the only reason I sit before you today.

30 years ago my family lost 2 young lives in the Stratford Toll accident. Joey was 6 years old. He died when the car he was riding in with his best friend who also died, exploded after being hit from behind by a truck driver who fell asleep at the wheel. His 18 year old sister also died in that fiery crash. I put part of the blame for that accident on the irresponsible driver and part of the blame on a stationary building erected by the state of Connecticut under the guise of collecting money to take care of roads; money that never got used for that purpose. Therefore, in my opinion an accident that never needed to happen. Had they not been slowed down for that toll, they would be here today.

I find myself thinking about Tammy, then 18, and Joey, then 6, quite often and wonder what they would have been like now. I have decided Tammy would have had a house full of children, and would now be a grandmother, since she left behind a 2 week old son and she would have loved growing old. Should would not dye her hair, she would just let it go grey and be proud of it. She would have loved Uggs!

Joey, would have been an engineer or a builder. He loved to take things apart to see how they worked. Case and point, he took apart his parents gas grill at the age of 5. He also would have been a great dad and a great uncle. He loved his little brother Mark and pushed him to succeed and grow, even at his young age.

So today, I choose to think about the fine, fun loving and dear people I know they would have been. I continue to be grateful for a toll taker that day, for protecting our Mark, and God for allowing our family to move on, when on that day, none of us ever thought it would be possible.

My family lives with that loss every day and the anniversary every year is one of the most difficult days of my life, every single year.