

Testimony by Lieutenant Thomas Mrozek, Fairfield Police Department

Support House Bill 5344

“An Act Concerning Child Endangerment While Operating a Motor Vehicle While Under the Influence of Intoxicating Liquor or Drugs”

March 17, 2014

Good Afternoon. My name is Thomas Mrozek and I am a Lieutenant at Fairfield Police Department. I have been a police officer for the Town of Fairfield for over 30 years. Thank you Co-Chair Colman, Co-Chair Fox and the members of the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 5344, “An Act Concerning Child Endangerment While Operating a Motor Vehicle While Under the Influence of Intoxicating Liquor or Drugs”

For the last 5 years I have been working the day shift as the Shift Commander. It has become increasingly upsetting to my officers investigating a DUI crash at 8AM. They found a mother that was driving her young children to school and crashed her vehicle. During the officers’ investigation she is arrested for DUI at 8 in the morning, while bringing her children to school. At the departments Headquarters, it is learned that this is her third DUI arrest, second offense with her kids in the car. The most recent arrest, resulted in charges of Risk of Injury to a Minor, to later only have the charges dropped by the courts.

There have been many times, that myself and my officers have charged the operators of a vehicle; parents driving home after dinner from a restaurant with kids in the car. Having too much to drink, they have crashed. This results in a DUI arrest and because of the children, the charge Risk of Injury to a Minor is added. More often than not we see the Risk of Injury dropped or a diversion program granted by the courts, much to our frustration. House Bill 5344 supports a long overdue Child Endangerment Law specifically for Driving Under the Influence, increasing the penalty for driving drunk with children as passengers. In addition, a longer use of an Ignition Interlock Device affords children a better chance at becoming adults without the risk of injury or death because of an irresponsible parent or an adult driver. I support a Child Endangerment law specific to Driving Under the Influence in order to keep innocent children safe. **Every child deserves a sober designated driver.** Thank you.