

Connecticut State Grange

TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT STATE GRANGE IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL 5288, AN ACT CONCERNING CHEMICAL ROAD TREATMENTS

FEBRUARY 28, 2014

I am Gordon Gibson of Vernon, Legislative Liaison for the Connecticut State Grange. I am speaking today in support of Raised Bill 5288, An Act Concerning Chemical Road Treatments.

The Grange has for many years advocated for roads and highways that are safe in all weather. The magnesium chloride solution the State is now putting on our roads does a good job of liquefying the ice so it will run off, but without a rust inhibitor what is it doing to the undersides of the vehicles using the roads? Reportedly the solution now in use causes significant deterioration to the undersides of the vehicles, particularly their frames and brake lines. How long will it be before a driver applies the brakes on his vehicle, only to have the brake lines rupture because of the corrosion from the magnesium chloride solution that has been applied to our roads? Then, with a brake failure, what kind of an accident will occur and what damages will result to both people and property? What liability will the courts hold the State responsible for despite its sovereign immunity because it knowingly created a hazardous condition?

We have been told the main reason for not including a rust inhibitor in the mixture now applied to the roads is the cost. However, if the mixture causes significant corrosion to the vehicles using the roads, how much corrosion is it causing to the metal components in the roads such as maintenance hole covers, storm drain grids and expansion joints in our bridges? How much sooner than normal will these components need to be replaced because of the corrosion and how much will that cost? How much faster will the snowplow blades on the State trucks deteriorate and how much will this increase the cost of maintaining the plows in good condition? To the best of our knowledge no one knows the answers to these questions, but these additional future costs should be weighted against the cost of the rust inhibitor.

The Grange has also been concerned for many years about our environment. What effects does the solution now used by the Department of Transportation have on the wetlands and streams it ultimately drains into? What effects will it have if a rust inhibitor is added? We believe that at this time no one has the answers to these concerns. The grange therefore asks and recommends that in addition to the study now proposed in Raised Bill 5288 a study should also be made by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to find the answers to these questions and submit their report no later than January 1, 2105, the same date by which the Commissioner of Transportation shall submit his report as proposed in Raised Bill 5288.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

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