

ConnPIRG

— Standing Up —
To Powerful Interests

Testimony of Sean Doyle, Program Associate
Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG)

in support of

Senate Bill No. 336:

An Act Concerning The Penalty For Causing Harm To A Vulnerable User Of A Public Way

Chairperson Maynard, Chairperson Guerrero and Members of the Committee: My name is Sean Doyle and I am the Program Associate of the Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Proposed Senate Bill No. 336: An Act Concerning The Penalty For Causing Harm To A Vulnerable User Of A Public Way.

ConnPIRG is a non-profit, non-partisan consumer group. Our Transportation Program works to promote a multimodal transportation system that reflects and supports the way people increasingly want to travel today.

Our roads, our most ubiquitous public spaces, are increasingly used by non-driving users: bikers, walkers, joggers, people working. Sharing this space with cars and trucks heightens the risks to these vulnerable users when accidents occur. Unfortunately, when a vulnerable user is injured due to a driver not driving with reasonable care, the drivers are rarely held accountable.

We need enforcement tools to improve safety for all users of our roads and to encourage non-motorized transportation. This bill would establish a class of vulnerable users of our public roadways and establish a substantial fine for seriously injuring or killing a vulnerable user by driving without "reasonable care."

For six decades, the annual number of miles driven by Americans was on the rise year after year. But since 2004, Americans have reversed the trend and have been driving less. Meanwhile, public transportation ridership is rising and people are walking and biking more. This is not just a national trend. In Connecticut, driving miles peaked in 2007 and has fallen by nearly 5% since then. This trend has been demonstrated in a series of reports by ConnPIRG Education Fund accessible at www.connpirgedfund.org.

Approximately 1400 pedestrians and cyclists are injured every year in Connecticut by careless drivers. As more people opt to bike, walk and recreate in our streets, it's important that there are serious consequences for negligence. And it's equally important that vulnerable users know their welfare is being looked after.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 336.

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