

Testimony for Transportation Committee

Submitted by Michael D'Amato

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My name is Michael D'Amato. I own and have operated Nationwide Driving since 1971. I am writing to both voice my opposition to proposed bill #448, and more importantly, the onerous underlying consequences of such a proposal, if passed.

We in America live in a society based on the free market system. We are a nation of laws, and realize the importance of hard work, creativity, and the opportunities associated with these things. We also realize that as citizens, we have to contribute our fair share to society. Taxes, fees, and other fiduciary obligations are a fact of life and should be regarded as the price of doing business.

My colleagues will voice their displeasure concerning the "merits" of on-line training for the mandated eight hour classroom driving course. I will go on record as the past president of the Driving School Association of The Americas and state that "on-line training" for something as important as the safe operation of a motor vehicle is woefully inadequate.

This bill asks that an industry, namely ours, help subsidize new drivers get this course either for free, or at a drastically reduced fee. Furthermore, it wants to take instructors from schools, both commercial, and secondary, and have them teach at these rates in direct competition with the very schools that hired and trained them. Meanwhile, the driving schools still have to pay taxes, pay gas, maintain their vehicles, rent, and advertise. This really is something that we see in a socialist society.

The real hubris comes to light when the proponents of this bill have the temerity to change the statute so as to MANDATE that all driving schools offer on-line training, even though doing so, is injurious to their business! This would entail operating and maintaining a website so that we could help people take this course. I have never heard of this. Anybody, anywhere who is going to drive must be aware of all the inherent expenses associated with driving. Gas, insurance, maintenance, and the cost of the car. Why should ANY BUSINESS be asked, or FORCED to subsidize customers who want to buy their product.

Prices for the 8 Hr. course are fair. Access to this course is readily available. If driving schools are forced into this divisive enterprise, then it is only fair that the state should mandate that all insurance companies, gas stations, auto body shops etc., do their fair share to help the new drivers. No state should interfere with legitimate, law-abiding, tax-paying, job-creating folks as long as the consumer has his or her choice in the marketplace. It is what made this country what it is. I would hope that this slippery slope is one that Connecticut avoids.

I welcome any questions.

Michael A. D'Amato