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Testimony of Janice Heggie Margolis, Executive Director  
Before the Transportation Committee  
On Proposed H.B. No. 6588  
**“An Act Concerning Open Containers in Motor Vehicles”**  
February 9, 2015

Thank you Chairman Guerrero and members of the committee for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony to you today in support of H.B. No. 6588 “An Act Concerning Open Containers of Alcohol in Motor Vehicles”. I am submitting testimony on behalf of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Connecticut.

In Connecticut, it is illegal for someone to drink any alcohol beverage while operating a motor vehicle on a public road. It is not illegal for a passenger, other than the driver, to possess or consume alcohol in a motor vehicle. Prohibiting possession of an open alcoholic beverage container in a motor vehicle is a critical component of a model open container law as a drinking driver could very easily hand off a drink to a passenger. This bill would bring us one step closer to keeping drivers from becoming intoxicated – or more intoxicated- while they are behind the wheel. The forty states that currently have a federally compliant open container law give lie to this statement – clearly, this is a common sense, enforceable law. Individuals can drive with closed drinks, transport their drinks in a trunk, or reseal their beverage before transport. Additionally, in order to stop drinking and driving, we must endeavor to stop driving while driving and an open container law is one of the tools to do this. We send a clear message when we say that vehicles are not to be used as rolling bars – that drinking should be done separately from driving.

Open container laws make sense and save lives. It is time that Connecticut enter the mainstream of states and pass life-saving open container legislation like H.B. No. 6588.

Thank you.