State of Connecticut

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Sen. Maynard, Rep. Guerrera and members of the Transportation Committee,

I am Sen. Art Linares, and I am testifying in support of Proposed S.B. No. 510: AN ACT CREATING SIGNS FOR A SAFETY PILOT PROGRAM.

Last summer, a fourth grade teacher at Jack Jackter Intermediate School in Colchester named Mike Byrne contacted me about the Signs for Safety assignment that he and art teacher Kathy Brandon had designed to teach students about traffic safety.

Their goal was to empower younger students to encourage older students to drive more safely.

Students created signs to teach their classmates, older siblings, and friends about topics such as the danger of texting while driving. This has become one of the most pressing issues for the Transportation Committee, the legislature, and the public.

In Connecticut, the state Department of Motor Vehicles notes that motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death for 15 to 19 year olds.

If we can teach students as young as fourth graders about the dangers of texting while driving, driving while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, and exceeding the speed limits, they are more likely to be safer drivers when it is time to apply for their drivers' licenses.

They will also be more likely to speak up if they are in a motor vehicle with a family member or friend who is driving dangerously, and prevent serious injuries or even save lives.

Allowing young students to create a sign or signs that others will see is a great opportunity to engage them in their communities, and to give them ownership of safe roads, to school, to sports practice, and every other destination.

Working with the Department of Transportation on this pilot program will demonstrate to students that what they do matters, and that they can make a difference in their schools, their communities and their world.

Thank you for your consideration of SB 510.