

Chairman Guerrero, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Kathleen Costello and I live in West Hartford. I wish to express **my opposition to Proposed Bills 6321 and 6348, Acts Concerning Parent Attendance At Safe Driving Instruction Courses**. As a divorced mother of four teenaged boys who works, attends school full-time, and is involved in many activities in my community, I can appreciate the notion that we are all pressed for time, overscheduled, and do not really want to add one more item to already packed calendars. However, just as each child deserves to have her parent attend pediatric appointments, soccer games, and graduation, each child deserves to know that her parent cares enough about her entry into the exciting and dangerous world of driving by investing two hours in a classroom with her. It matters.

In 2013, I discovered that my oldest son had violated one of the newly modified teen driving laws by transporting friends around after having his license for only two weeks. Through a friend, I was fortunate enough to meet Tim Hollister, parent of a teenage son who died when he lost control of his car. Tim was about to publish a parent's guide for teen drivers and he was gracious enough to allow me to read an advance copy of his book, *Not So Fast*, and write a book review for local press. Part of the book describes the "carnage on the roads" that led then-Governor Jodi Rell to establish a teen safe driving task force in 2007, which Tim was eager to join. The task force spent countless hours researching, analyzing data, learning laws in other states, and conducting interviews to come up with a proposal to amend the current teen driving laws. One major provision was the inclusion of the mandated two hour safe driving instruction with a parent. From a practical standpoint, as we've heard from testimony today, the teen driving curriculum has the potential to change each year, based on ever-evolving technology and statutes.

As a Masters of Social Work candidate, I am placed at the Office of the Child Advocate, with the primary focus on reviewing child fatalities. Over and over again, we see how crucial parent engagement is to child and adolescent decision making and emotional health. Parent engagement with each child, not just the first.

Through this child fatality work, we were pleased to be able to report to the teen safe driving task force that *not one* licensed or permitted teen in Connecticut died in a car crash last year. Not one. While this cannot yet be considered a trend, we of course hope that it continues. And we have our stricter – and yes, maybe less convenient – teen driving laws to thank. We owe it to the members of this task force and to our children to sit side-by-side and learn about safe driving together.

I appreciate your time and your consideration.

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