

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Senate Bill No. 239, *An Act Requiring Verification to Reduce False Alarms*

Public Hearing March 1, 2016

Submitted by: Douglas M. Curtiss, President Sonitrol New England.

Submitted to: Public Safety and Security Committee,
Connecticut General Assembly

Dear Co-Chair Senator Larson, Co-Chair Representative Dargan and Legislative Committee Members,

Thank you for an opportunity to submit testimony in regards to proposed **Senate Bill No. 239, An Act Requiring Verification to Reduce False Alarms**. I am in SUPPORT of the bill as proposed.

Good morning/afternoon, my name is Doug Curtiss and I'm the president and owner of Sonitrol New England. We are a Connecticut based security service company with over 40 years of experience.

Police departments across North America are continually challenged by the need to respond to all burglar alarms, particularly when a staggering 94% to 99% of alarms prove to be false. Despite extensive efforts to combat the problem — including call verification, permits, and fines — the cost for responding to false alarms continues to mount while the false alarm rate remains essentially unchanged.

Since the spring of 2015, Sonitrol New England, Hartford Police Department, Emergency Services and Telecommunications Department, and the Hartford Board of Education have been conducting a False Alarm Reduction Pilot Program into the false alarm rate at the Hartford schools. The false alarm statistics are staggering:

In March 2015, there was a total of **464** alarms city wide. **458** were false alarms that required a police response.

- That's a 98.7% false alarm rate
- Each false alarm has a two-officer response because it's a burglar alarm
- On average each officer spends 32 minutes per false alarm
- That's 243 officer hours times two. Totaling 486 officer hours wasted on false alarms in one month

This leads me into the specifics of the proposed bill. The Statement of Purpose is to require that alarm monitoring companies attempt to verify the validity of an alarm before requesting state or municipal police to respond to the alarm. I would recommend that this committee go even further by (1) changing a word in the definition and (2) by inserting language for an additional definition:

1. Change “Alarm Verification” to “Alarm Investigation” to read as follows:

(3) “Alarm [verification] Investigation” means an attempt by an alarm monitoring company to verify whether the activation of an alarm system was caused by a false alarm by contacting an “authorized” individual at the premises where the alarm system is installed by telephone or other electronic means when the alarm system is activated and, if such attempt to contact the “authorized” individual fails, by contacting the subscriber by telephone or other electronic means.

2. New definition for “Alarm Verification” to read as follows:

“Alarm Verification” means that the alarm monitoring company has verified using visual and auditory means that the alarm is an actual crime-in-progress.

4 d (2) The provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection shall not apply if the alarm monitoring company uses a verified alarm system which enables such company to verify by visual or auditory means that the activation is an actual crime-in-progress.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration into this important public safety issue. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of any assistance to your committee as you move forward with this bill.

Doug Curtiss

President, Sonitrol New England