



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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Public Safety and Security Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Good morning, Senators Larson and Guglielmo, Representative Verrengia, and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee, I am Dr. Dora Schriro, Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on several of the legislative proposals you are considering, including Governor Malloy's proposal to advance the rights and protections afforded sexual assault victims and two from our agency; one to protect law enforcement patrolling Connecticut's roads and the other, to advance the efficiency of our efforts.

SB 17-AA Promoting Fairness in Access to Information, Support and Justice for Sexual Assault Victims

DESSP fully supports the legislation put forward by Governor Malloy, codifying several of the state's best practices already in place, further advancing the rights of survivors of sexual assaults and underscoring key responsibilities of state and local agencies. Specifically, SB 17-AA:

- Requires health care facilities to contact a sexual assault victim advocate upon the arrival of a victim of sexual assault at their facility.
- Requires a barcode to be affixed to every sexual assault evidence kit for tracking by the Division of Scientific Services (DSS) within DESPP.
- Requires the Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations to develop training and guidelines around the use of kit-tracking software to record when a kit is used and when it is transferred from a hospital to the DSS.
- Requires the Commission to develop policies and procedures to ensure victims have access to information regarding their kit, including information about when DSS tests the kit, when DSS

enters the DNA from the kit into a state or federal DNA data bank, and whether the sample matches a profile in that DNA data bank.

I also appear before you this morning to acknowledge the considerable harm that some in our state cause others; its effects are long lasting and far-reaching. More remarkable, is the resiliency and resolve that crime victims demonstrate every day despite these personal tragedies. I also wish to thank the crime victims' agencies and organizations throughout the state and across the country including of course, the CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence, for their action and advocacy. On behalf of the many men and women in the six divisions of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, notably, the Divisions of Scientific Services and State Police, we are unwavering in our commitment to Connecticut's crime victim community, and we will always do our best to meet the letter and the spirit of this law.

To that end, we know that our work does not end here. We will continue to seek out, and strive to hear all that survivors have to say. We will continue to enhance our prevention efforts, respond quickly to apprehend suspects, conduct competent investigations and provide reliable evidence including timely processing of rape test kits to ensure their prosecution to the greatest extent allowable under the law.

SB 221-AA Increasing the Fine for Failing to Move Over for an Emergency Vehicle and Injuring the Operator of the Emergency Vehicle

This is a DESPP proposal, one that we fully support. The strengthening of laws governing our first responders is vital to keeping them safe and secure as they perform their duties and put their lives on the line for us every day. Since its inception in 1903, the CSP has sustained 22 line-of-duty death of troopers, of which nine were victims of traffic fatalities. Every year, non-compliant drivers strike, and frequently injure, a number of other troopers in their vehicles or alongside the road while assisting motorists, apprehending suspects, and performing other police functions.

This proposal would strengthen the 'move over law' by making the fines imposed for violating the law and causing physical injury mirror those of the endangerment of a highway worker statutes. This bill would increase the maximum fine from \$2500 to \$5000 for anyone violating the 'move over' law and causing injury to the operator of an emergency vehicle including those driven by law enforcement personnel.

HB 5220- AA Authorizing Third Party Fingerprinting Services

This is a DESPP proposal, one that we fully support. This bill would authorize the Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to enter into agreements with independent contractors to provide fingerprinting services only, not criminal history checks.

In total, the Connecticut State Police Troops and our State Police Bureau of Identification (SPBI) unit at Headquarters have experienced an 81.3% increase in fingerprinting volume since 2015 when the last significant change in statute occurred. We anticipate volume will increase further when additional long-term-care providers are required to be fingerprinted beginning in 2018.

Enacting this bill would enable Troopers to spend more of their time on patrol in the field, as well as SPBI unit staff at HQ processing requests, addressing on the front end some of unit's growing backlog.

SB 222-AA Authorizing the Appointment of a Fire Marshal and Police Officers at the Connecticut Airport Authority

This bill would allow (1) the Commissioner of Administrative Services to designate a fire marshal for the Connecticut Airport Authority; and (2) the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection to designate police officers for the Connecticut Airport Authority.

The Department continues to have concerns regarding section 2 of the bill. There has been on-going discussion with the Connecticut Airport Authority (CAA) about that provision and we continue to analyze the necessities of that section. We have committed to work with the CAA in an effort to achieve an outcome that is agreeable to both agencies.

HB 5223-AAC Pursuits by Police Officers

This bill would:

- Permit a police officer to initiate or engage in a pursuit in an authorized motor vehicle only when the driver or occupant of the fleeing vehicle is suspected of committing a serious felony offense.
- Require organized local police departments to adhere to the statewide policy for pursuits by police officers and prohibits local police departments from establishing additional or different requirements for handling pursuits.
- Require the chief of police or Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, as the case may be, to submit a report when a pursuit by a police officer results in the serious physical injury or death of another person.
- Increase the penalty for increasing the speed of a motor vehicle in an attempt to escape or elude a police officer from a class A misdemeanor to a class E felony.

We understand and appreciate the intent of the legislation, and support the reporting requirements and the increase in penalty for engaging an officer in pursuit. Indeed, the State Police has in place both robust reporting requirements and a comprehensive administrative review process. Respectfully however, we cannot support the bill in its entirety as currently drafted because it unnecessarily limits the discretion of police officers to enforce the law by limiting pursuits to occasions where an officer knows that an occupant is suspected of the commission of a serious felony. We believe that this requirement would incentivize suspects to flee because they know that law enforcement will not pursue them, sharply curtailing enforcement of motor vehicle laws resulting in decreased safety on our roads, and limiting legitimate law enforcement activity that could otherwise result in the apprehension of suspects with pending charges or related reasons.

We will continue our dialogue with the sponsor of the bill to work towards mutually agreeable language that addresses the underlying concerns raised.

HB 5225-AAC the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

This bill would prohibit the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection from appointing a sworn police officer to the position of deputy commissioner of the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, and organize the Office of Emergency Management and Office of Counter Terrorism within Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

Although we oppose this proposal, I have discussed it at length with Rep. Orange. I have the highest regard for the bill's Sponsor and share her commitment to achieve optimal outcomes. I commit to continue working closely with her to achieve the very best results.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I will answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Dora B. Schriro
Commissioner