



CONNECTICUT POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

365 Silas Deane Hwy, Suite 1A • Wethersfield, CT 06109

(860) 757-3909 Fax: (860) 436-6054

Web site: www.cpcanet.org

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Transportation Committee

Testimony submitted by: **The Connecticut Police Chiefs Association**
Chief Scott Sansom
Chief Mack Hawkins
Chief Paul Melanson

S.B. No. 388 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM FOR SPEED DETECTING CAMERAS AND CONCERNING SPEED WARNING SIGNS.

The Connecticut Police Chiefs Association opposes SB 388.

Good afternoon members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Chief Scott Sansom and I represent the Connecticut Chiefs of Police Association. I am here today to testify in opposition of Raised Bill 388, “An Act Establishing a Pilot Program for Speed Detecting Cameras and Concerning Speed Warning Signs.” This act has significant implications for both police operations and the municipalities in which these speed cameras would be installed.

One of the most significant impacts of this legislation is that implementing speed cameras in municipalities would effectively take away officer discretion to issue infractions to drivers. This would minimize officer discretion because it automatically issues a ticket to the registered owner and not necessarily the operator driving above a predetermined speed. Ultimately, this action is punitive beyond what is necessary to deter speeding because not every operator should be issued an infraction without exception. We all agree that we need to change poor operator’s behavior. We also know that for effective discipline it needs to be swift. An electronic ticket mailed three weeks after the incident only creates frustration and confusion. It is not effective in changing driving behavior.

Further, the purpose of issuing an infraction is to deter that behavior of the specific offender. If tickets are issued automatically based on the registration information captured by the speed camera, the camera cannot guarantee that the registered owner will always be the operator. This also defeats the purpose of deterring the unsafe behavior of the operator.

Although implementation of speed cameras would naturally result in increased revenue for municipalities, the implementation of these devices would be unfairly punitive to drivers who ultimately have no recourse to contest these fines once they are levied upon them. It will also have a disproportionate effect on lower income communities who do not have the financial means to pay for

these fines. The general public will likely view speed cameras solely as a means to increase revenue for municipalities not as a speed deterrent. These beliefs will have a negative effect on the public's already tainted view of police and government and ultimately subverts community policing efforts. Law enforcement efforts should never be used solely as a revenue source. This was a lesson learned from the DOJ Investigation into the Ferguson, Missouri city government's use of the Police Department to generate revenue for the general fund.

Based on their purpose, speed cameras would be placed in areas that have high volumes of traffic, accidents, and fatalities. Many of these areas in Connecticut are in our more urban lower income areas. This may unintentionally target particular populations based on socioeconomic status.

Speed cameras do not take into account the weather conditions, traffic flow, or whether there was a justifiable reason for the operator to speed. Studies have shown that implementing speed cameras results in slowed speeds on roadways, thus resulting in traffic congestion issues in areas where speed cameras are installed. There is also the likelihood that a speed camera records a false reading. This is problematic because there is no accuser for the operator to confront, and will likely be required to pay the fine regardless of whether the unit malfunctioned.

Lastly, although speed cameras may lower the speeds in some circumstances they have been known to contribute to an increased number of rear-end crashes, ultimately negating the argument that these cameras reduce traffic accidents.

Based on the available data, both anecdotal and through various studies completed on speed cameras, it is clear that implementing such a program would negatively impact communities as a whole and thus this bill should not be allowed to proceed further.

Thank You.