



## State of Connecticut

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### **Testimony in Support of House Bill 5287 Transportation Committee February 25, 2019**

Good morning/afternoon Co-Chairs of the Transportation Committee Senator Leone and Representative Lemar, Vice Chairs Senator Bergstein and Representative Simms, and Ranking Members Senator Martin and Representative Devlin, thank you for the subject matter public hearing and for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 5287.

As we all know, after our first responders such as police, fire departments, and EMS respond to a dangerous emergency like a structure fire, motor vehicle accident, or water main break, often times utility crews are called in for repairs or to address a power, water or gas issue. These utility crews respond as quickly as possible, but without emergency lights or sirens, which I am not advocating for, response times in high traffic areas can be delayed. Further, we are all familiar with Route 15 in Fairfield and New Haven County, often referred to as the Merritt or Wilbur Cross Parkway. This route provides key access to a large part of the state.

Currently, utility vehicles are not allowed to travel on State Route 15, even when responding to an emergency. Although these emergency utility vehicles meet the height requirements, they are still restricted from using Route 15 under any circumstances. This is very troublesome in areas such as Southern Fairfield County, where traffic on roads such as I-95 become extremely congested during peak travel hours.

Our understanding is that State Police are willing to allow these vehicles to use the road because they meet the necessary height restrictions. Furthermore, after speaking with the Department of Transportation, they are supportive of this bill, so long as the height restrictions are met.

Moreover, this legislation would only allow these vehicles to use these roads under emergency conditions only. Utility crews would still be restricted under routine operations, but this bill will greatly improve the response times of emergency utility crews, which is why I urge favorable action on H.B. 5287.

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